

Breast Cancer



Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women in the UK. This is a condition that can be treated successfully if diagnosed early. With this in mind, The *IMWS Health Committee* is planning to hold a **ladies only** Breast Cancer Awareness Day in February 2010, at the Al-Hikmah Centre, in Batley.

What is breast cancer?

The human body is made up of billions of building blocks called cells. In breast cancer there is uncontrolled growth of these cells in the breast, creating a lump which is called a tumour.

If the tumour is detected early, then there is a good chance that it can be treated successfully. The more the cancer has spread, the more difficult it is to treat.

What causes breast cancer?

- Family History: Women with a mother, sister or daughter diagnosed with breast cancer have an 80% higher risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer themselves.
- Obesity increases the risk of breast cancer in later life by up to 30%.
- Women currently using hormone replacement therapy have a slightly increased risk of breast cancer.
- A more active lifestyle reduces breast cancer risk.

How common is it?

- Breast cancer is the most common cancer
- Over 45,500 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer each year
- In the UK just under 12,000 women and around 90 men die from breast cancer each year

What is Breast Screening?

The NHS Breast Screening Programme was set up in 1988; it provides free **breast screening** every three years for women aged between 50 and 70 years in the UK. Breast screening is a method of **detecting breast cancer** at a very early stage when it will be most responsive to treatment. These small changes in the breast may be too small to be felt either by the woman or by her doctor. A mammogram, which is a special x-ray that uses very low doses of radiation, is used to visualise the internal structures of the breast. It is taken while carefully compressing the breast. Most women find it a bit uncomfortable and very few women find it painful. Research has shown that for most women it is less painful than having a blood test and compares well with having a blood pressure measured.

Should I attend screening?

The short answer is ***YES!***

A recent survey by Warwick University has found that members of the South Asian community are **15 times less likely** to attend breast cancer screening than members of other communities. The uptake in respect of Muslim women is even lower. This is a major concern. The chances of successful treatment and recovery from breast cancer depend on early detection. Similarly many Asian women tend to miss appointments for smear tests used to detect cervical cancers. Many women are placing their lives at risk by ignoring invitations to attend screening programmes.

What are the success rates for treatment?

The most recent figures show around 80 per cent of women in the UK diagnosed today will be alive in five years time. This is largely due to increased awareness of breast cancer, the introduction of the screening programme and the successes of breast cancer research, which have led to improved treatments.

Contacts for further information:

- **Ladies only** event for Breast Cancer in Feb 2010: Do look out for this forthcoming awareness day at the Al-Hikmah Centre this year, where you can meet local health professionals and have any queries answered. Such as what symptoms to look out for and the latest treatments available.
- **Website:** www.breastcancercare.org.uk
- **Telephone:** Breast Cancer Care helpline: 0808 800 6000
- **Your GP:** If you are worried about yourself then contact your family doctor