October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

**‘Buddy Up to Beat Breast Cancer’**

Breast Cancer Awareness Month



Quality of care for Veteran’s includes raising awareness around important health topics. By highlighting some of the national health awareness campaigns each month, Veterans can get ideas, information, and resources on a variety of health matters.
October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and we’re here to let Veterans know the importance of getting screened and early detection.  For more than 23 years the VA has led the nation in breast cancer screenings and has focused on coordination of care and improving access to screenings.  In 2015, VA screened 86 percent of its women Veteran patients ages 50-74, compared with the private sector at 73 percent.

Each year, approximately 200,000 women in the U.S. are diagnosed with breast cancer, making it the second most common cancer in women.  In other words, approximately one in eight females will develop breast cancer at some point in life.

Breast cancer is a disease where abnormal cells in the breast grow uncontrollably and form lumps or tumors. If left untreated, the cancer can spread to other parts of the body. Both men and women can have breast cancer, although male breast cancer is less common.

Early detection and knowing how to lower your chances of getting breast cancer can help you and your loved ones live healthy lives.  That’s why it’s important to get screened and learn about the risk factors.

**Risk factors include:**

• Getting older
• Being female
• Having a close family member with breast cancer
• Not exercising and having certain gene mutations
• Being overweight or obese
• Previous radiation therapy/exposure to the breasts or chest

By maintaining a healthy weight, getting regular exercise, and limiting alcohol consumption you can help reduce your risk of breast cancer.

VA recommends all women begin getting yearly mammograms by age 45, and every other year beginning at age 55.  A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast and is one of the most common screenings for breast cancer. Routine screenings can often find breast cancer early and make treatment more successful.

The VA provides mammograms for all Veterans, with 45 facilities providing on-site services using digital mammography along with mobile mammography, allowing Veterans in rural areas of the country to get screenings and have their mammograms read by a VA breast radiologist, without traveling far from home.

By talking to your health care provider and knowing the proper precautions to take, you and your loved ones can live healthy lives.  Remember that early detection is the key in helping your chances of surviving breast cancer.

**What men should know about male breast cancer?**

If a man develops a lump under his nipple, he should be evaluated by his doctor. Often, a breast lump can be caused by a benign condition called gynecomastia. Other symptoms of male breast cancer can include **nipple inversion, pain, bleeding or skin ulceration**.

**What do you need to know about male breast cancer?**

**Male breast cancer**

* Overview. Male breast cancer is a rare cancer that forms in the breast tissue of men. ...
* Symptoms. Make an appointment with your doctor if you have any persistent signs or symptoms that worry you.
* Causes. It's not clear what causes male breast cancer. ...
* Risk factors. The risk of breast cancer increases as you age. ...