
Professional Certificate in Health Communication for Breast Health

Breast Cancer Awareness and Prevention

Breast Cancer Awareness and Prevention: Key Terms and Vocabulary

Breast cancer is a type of cancer that forms in the cells of the breast. It is one of the most common cancers among women worldwide. Understanding key terms and vocabulary related to breast cancer awareness and prevention is crucial in promoting early detection, treatment, and overall breast health.

1. Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is a malignant tumor that starts in the cells of the breast. It can occur in both men and women, but it is more common in women. Breast cancer can manifest as a lump in the breast, changes in the size or shape of the breast, nipple discharge, or skin changes on the breast.

2. Mammogram

A mammogram is a low-dose X-ray of the breast that is used to detect and diagnose breast cancer. It is an essential screening tool for early detection of breast cancer, especially in women over the age of 40.

3. Self-Examination

Breast self-examination is a technique that women can use to check for any abnormalities in their breasts. It involves feeling the breasts for lumps, changes in size or shape, or other signs of breast cancer. Regular self-examinations can help women become familiar with their breasts and detect any changes early.

4. Clinical Breast Exam

A clinical breast exam is a physical examination of the breasts performed by a healthcare provider. During the exam, the provider checks for lumps, changes in size or shape, or other signs of breast cancer. Clinical breast exams are recommended as part of regular check-ups for women of all ages.

5. Biopsy

A biopsy is a procedure in which a sample of tissue is taken from the breast to be examined under a microscope for the presence of cancer cells. Biopsies can help determine if a breast lump or abnormality is cancerous or benign.

6. Estrogen

Estrogen is a hormone that plays a role in the development and growth of breast cancer. High levels of estrogen in the body can increase the risk of developing breast cancer. Hormone therapy and certain medications can help regulate estrogen levels in the body.

7. BRCA1 and BRCA2

BRCA1 and BRCA2 are genes that, when mutated, increase the risk of developing breast cancer and ovarian

cancer. Women with mutations in these genes have a higher risk of developing breast cancer at a younger age. Genetic testing can determine if a person carries mutations in BRCA1 and BRCA2.

8. Lumpectomy

A lumpectomy is a surgical procedure in which only the tumor and a small margin of surrounding tissue are removed from the breast. It is a common treatment option for early-stage breast cancer and aims to preserve as much of the breast as possible.

9. Mastectomy

A mastectomy is a surgical procedure in which the entire breast is removed. It is often recommended for women with large tumors or multiple areas of cancer in the breast. There are different types of mastectomies, including total mastectomy, radical mastectomy, and partial mastectomy.

10. Radiation Therapy

Radiation therapy is a treatment for breast cancer that uses high-energy rays to kill cancer cells. It is often used after surgery to destroy any remaining cancer cells in the breast. Radiation therapy can help reduce the risk of cancer recurrence.

11. Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is a treatment for breast cancer that uses drugs to kill cancer cells or stop them from growing. It is often used in combination with surgery or radiation therapy to treat breast cancer. Chemotherapy can have side effects such as hair loss, nausea, and fatigue.

12. Hormone Therapy

Hormone therapy is a treatment for breast cancer that blocks the effects of estrogen in the body. It is used to treat hormone receptor-positive breast cancer, which grows in response to estrogen. Hormone therapy can help reduce the risk of cancer recurrence.

13. Metastasis

Metastasis is the spread of cancer cells from the primary tumor to other parts of the body. In breast cancer, metastasis can occur in the lymph nodes, bones, liver, lungs, or brain. Metastatic breast cancer is more difficult to treat and has a lower survival rate.

14. Triple-Negative Breast Cancer

Triple-negative breast cancer is a type of breast cancer that does not have receptors for estrogen, progesterone, or HER2. It tends to be more aggressive and difficult to treat than other types of breast cancer. Triple-negative breast cancer is often treated with chemotherapy.

15. Survivorship

Survivorship refers to the period after a person completes treatment for breast cancer. It focuses on the physical, emotional, and psychosocial aspects of living beyond cancer. Survivorship care plans are designed to help breast cancer survivors maintain their health and well-being.

16. Risk Factors

Risk factors are characteristics or behaviors that increase the likelihood of developing breast cancer. Some common risk factors for breast cancer include age, family history, genetic mutations, hormonal factors, and lifestyle choices such as smoking and alcohol consumption.

17. Prevention

Prevention strategies aim to reduce the risk of developing breast cancer. Maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active, limiting alcohol intake, and avoiding tobacco can help lower the risk of breast cancer. Regular screenings and early detection are also essential in preventing breast cancer.

18. Genetic Counseling

Genetic counseling is a process in which individuals at risk of inherited conditions, such as BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations, receive information and support to help them make informed decisions about genetic testing and cancer risk management. Genetic counselors assess family history and provide guidance on risk reduction strategies.

19. Support Groups

Support groups are communities of individuals affected by breast cancer who come together to share experiences, information, and emotional support. Support groups can provide a sense of belonging, reduce feelings of isolation, and offer practical advice on coping with the challenges of breast cancer.

20. Pink Ribbon

The pink ribbon is a symbol of breast cancer awareness and solidarity with those affected by the disease. It is often used in campaigns, events, and fundraising efforts to raise awareness about breast cancer and support research for a cure. Wearing a pink ribbon signifies support for breast cancer survivors and those undergoing treatment.

21. Early Detection

Early detection of breast cancer is crucial for successful treatment and improved outcomes. Regular mammograms, clinical breast exams, and self-examinations can help detect breast cancer at an early stage when it is most treatable. Women are encouraged to be proactive in monitoring their breast health and seeking medical attention for any changes or abnormalities.

22. Screening Guidelines

Screening guidelines are recommendations for the timing and frequency of mammograms, clinical breast exams, and other screenings for breast cancer. Guidelines may vary based on age, family history, and individual risk factors. Adhering to screening guidelines can help detect breast cancer early and improve survival rates.

23. Inflammatory Breast Cancer

Inflammatory breast cancer is a rare and aggressive form of breast cancer that often does not present as a lump. Instead, the breast may appear red, swollen, and warm to the touch. Inflammatory breast cancer

requires prompt diagnosis and aggressive treatment, including chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation therapy.

24. Ductal Carcinoma In Situ (DCIS)

Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) is a non-invasive form of breast cancer that starts in the milk ducts of the breast. DCIS does not spread to surrounding tissues but can increase the risk of developing invasive breast cancer in the future. Treatment for DCIS may include surgery, radiation therapy, or hormone therapy.

25. Lymphedema

Lymphedema is a condition that causes swelling in the arms or legs due to a build-up of lymph fluid. It can occur as a side effect of breast cancer treatment, such as surgery or radiation therapy, which damages the lymphatic system. Lymphedema can be managed with compression garments, exercise, and manual lymphatic drainage.

26. Herceptin

Herceptin is a targeted therapy drug used to treat HER2-positive breast cancer, which overexpresses the HER2 protein. Herceptin works by blocking the HER2 protein and slowing the growth of cancer cells. It is often used in combination with chemotherapy or other treatments for HER2-positive breast cancer.

27. Oncotype DX

Oncotype DX is a genomic test that analyzes the activity of certain genes in breast cancer cells to predict the risk of recurrence and the benefit of chemotherapy. Oncotype DX results help oncologists tailor treatment plans for individual patients based on their unique genetic profile.

28. Survivorship Care Plan

A survivorship care plan is a comprehensive document that outlines the individualized follow-up care and support for breast cancer survivors after completing treatment. The care plan includes information on treatment received, potential late effects, recommended screenings, and strategies for maintaining overall health and well-being.

29. Carcinogen

A carcinogen is a substance or agent that can cause cancer. Carcinogens can be found in the environment, food, tobacco smoke, and workplace chemicals. Minimizing exposure to carcinogens and adopting healthy lifestyle habits can reduce the risk of developing cancer, including breast cancer.

30. Triple Assessment

Triple assessment is a diagnostic approach used to evaluate breast abnormalities and determine the likelihood of cancer. It involves a combination of clinical examination, imaging tests (such as mammography or ultrasound), and biopsy. Triple assessment helps healthcare providers make an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan for breast cancer.

31. Lymph Node Dissection

Lymph node dissection is a surgical procedure in which lymph nodes in the armpit (axilla) are removed and examined for the presence of cancer cells. It is often done during breast cancer surgery to determine if the cancer has spread to nearby lymph nodes. Lymph node dissection can help guide further treatment decisions.

32. Recurrence

Recurrence is the return of cancer after treatment has been completed. In breast cancer, recurrence can occur in the breast, chest wall, lymph nodes, or other parts of the body. Regular follow-up care and monitoring are essential for detecting and treating recurrent breast cancer early.

33. In Situ

In situ refers to cancer that is confined to the tissue where it started and has not spread to surrounding tissues or organs. Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) and lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS) are examples of in situ breast cancers. In situ cancers are considered non-invasive and have a high cure rate when treated early.

34. Hormone Receptor-Positive

Hormone receptor-positive breast cancer is a type of cancer that grows in response to estrogen or progesterone. It is more common in postmenopausal women and can be treated with hormone therapy to block the effects of these hormones. Hormone receptor status is an important factor in determining treatment options for breast cancer.

35. Prophylactic Mastectomy

Prophylactic mastectomy is a preventive surgery in which one or both breasts are removed to reduce the risk of developing breast cancer. It is often recommended for women with a strong family history of breast cancer or mutations in BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes. Prophylactic mastectomy can significantly reduce the risk of breast cancer.

36. Risk Reduction

Risk reduction strategies aim to lower the likelihood of developing breast cancer in individuals at increased risk. These strategies may include lifestyle modifications, chemoprevention (use of medications to prevent cancer), and prophylactic surgery. Risk reduction counseling can help individuals make informed decisions about their breast cancer risk.

37. Palliative Care

Palliative care is specialized medical care that focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of a serious illness, such as breast cancer. It aims to improve the quality of life for patients and their families by addressing physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Palliative care can be provided alongside curative treatment for breast cancer.

38. Survivorship Programs

Survivorship programs are comprehensive care programs that provide support and resources for breast cancer survivors after completing treatment. These programs may include survivorship care plans,

counseling, support groups, wellness programs, and educational resources. Survivorship programs help survivors transition to post-treatment life and maintain their health and well-being.

39. Chemoprevention

Chemoprevention is the use of medications or other agents to reduce the risk of developing cancer, including breast cancer. Drugs such as tamoxifen and raloxifene can help lower the risk of hormone receptor-positive breast cancer in high-risk women. Chemoprevention may be recommended for individuals with a strong family history of breast cancer or certain genetic mutations.

40. Metastatic Breast Cancer

Metastatic breast cancer is advanced breast cancer that has spread beyond the breast and nearby lymph nodes to other parts of the body, such as the bones, liver, lungs, or brain. Metastatic breast cancer is considered stage IV and is more difficult to treat than early-stage breast cancer. Treatment aims to control the spread of cancer, manage symptoms, and improve quality of life.

41. Breast Reconstruction

Breast reconstruction is a surgical procedure to restore the shape and appearance of the breast after mastectomy or lumpectomy. There are different types of breast reconstruction, including implants, tissue flap reconstruction, and nipple reconstruction. Breast reconstruction can help improve body image, self-esteem, and quality of life for breast cancer survivors.

42. Ductal Carcinoma

Ductal carcinoma is a type of breast cancer that starts in the cells lining the milk ducts of the breast. It is the most common type of breast cancer, accounting for about 80% of all breast cancer cases. Ductal carcinoma can be in situ (confined to the ducts) or invasive (spread beyond the ducts).

43. Lobular Carcinoma

Lobular carcinoma is a type of breast cancer that starts in the lobules (milk-producing glands) of the breast. It is less common than ductal carcinoma but can be more difficult to detect on imaging tests. Lobular carcinoma can be in situ (lobular carcinoma in situ, LCIS) or invasive (invasive lobular carcinoma).

44. BRCA Gene Mutation

BRCA gene mutations are genetic changes in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes that increase the risk of developing breast cancer and ovarian cancer. Individuals with BRCA gene mutations have a higher lifetime risk of breast cancer, particularly at a younger age. Genetic testing can identify BRCA gene mutations and help guide cancer risk management.

45. Triple-Negative Breast Cancer (TNBC)

Triple-negative breast cancer is a subtype of breast cancer that does not have receptors for estrogen, progesterone, or HER2. TNBC tends to be more aggressive and less responsive to hormone therapy or targeted treatments. Chemotherapy is often the primary treatment for triple-negative breast cancer.

46. Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy (CIPN)

Chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy is a common side effect of certain chemotherapy drugs that causes damage to nerves in the hands and feet. Symptoms of CIPN may include numbness, tingling, pain, and weakness. Managing CIPN involves monitoring symptoms, adjusting chemotherapy doses, and using medications to alleviate nerve pain.

47. Survivorship Care Plan (SCP)

A survivorship care plan is a personalized document that outlines the individualized follow-up care and support for breast cancer survivors after completing treatment. The SCP includes information on treatment received, potential late effects, recommended screenings, and strategies for maintaining overall health and well-being. Survivorship care plans help survivors transition to post-treatment life and promote long-term survivorship.

48. Hormone Receptor-Negative Breast Cancer

Hormone receptor-negative breast cancer is a type of breast cancer that does not have receptors for estrogen, progesterone, or HER2. It is less common than hormone receptor-positive breast cancer and may be more aggressive. Treatment options for hormone receptor-negative breast cancer may include chemotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy.

49. Invasive Lobular Carcinoma (ILC)

Invasive lobular carcinoma is a type of breast cancer that starts in the lobules (milk-producing glands) of the breast and spreads to surrounding tissues. ILC is less common than invasive ductal carcinoma but can be more difficult to detect on imaging tests. Treatment for invasive lobular carcinoma may include surgery, radiation therapy, and hormone therapy.

50. Oncotype DX Recurrence Score

The Oncotype DX recurrence score is a genomic test that analyzes the activity of certain genes in breast cancer cells to predict the risk of recurrence and the benefit of chemotherapy. The recurrence score helps oncologists tailor treatment plans for individual patients based on their unique genetic profile. A low recurrence score indicates a lower risk of recurrence and may help guide treatment decisions.