

1 IN 8

AMERICAN WOMEN WILL BE DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER



Twelve percent of American women will hear “you have breast cancer” in their lifetime. That’s 250,000 new cases each year. The statistics are scary, but there’s hope for those who understand their risk factors and who get diagnosed early.

“It’s fair to say that breast cancer is a significant health problem for the American woman,” says Dr. Maurice Cairoli, a medical oncologist at Regional Cancer Care Associates (RCCA), a community-based cancer center in Mount Holly, New Jersey.

“But because of early detection, many women can and do survive,” adds Dr. Rachel Levenbach, another medical oncologist at RCCA.

Early detection begins with the awareness—and mitigation, if possible—of risk factors. Some are straightforward, like obesity and estrogen supplementation, which can be mitigated with lifestyle changes.

Other risk factors, however, are more nebulous. “Patients often ask whether alcohol use and hormonal contraceptives lead to increased risk, and the answer is multifaceted,” Cairoli says.

The short answer is yes, there is a link between excessive alcohol use and breast cancer, but “social drinking will likely not increase a woman’s risk,” he continues. Likewise, the correlation with hormonal contraceptives is small and may not warrant a complete avoidance for all populations.

Genetic mutations are another gray area. “Most people know about BRCA1 and BRCA2, but over the last few years we’ve found new mutations that we’re now looking for,” says Levenbach. “For women with a strong family history, we have a preventative pill-based therapy that can reduce risk by 50 percent.”

The best way to understand your risk is to have a conversation with a medical oncologist, says Cairoli. “You are never too young to start the conversation. In our practice, we are always happy to discuss a woman’s concerns. Many women end up learning they’re not as high risk as they thought.”

CHOOSE THE PRACTICE THAT CARES

RCCA is passionate about providing state-of-the-art, university-level care in a convenient community setting in which each patient is personally known.

“At a large university center, patients can get lost in the crowd,” Cairoli says. “Here, we bring dedication, empathy, and sincerity to each patient interaction.”

Trained at highly accredited academic centers across the country, RCCA

physicians employ a diverse, collegial approach to cancer care. The team regularly meets with a multidisciplinary team of other specialists to determine each patient’s best course of treatment. Clinical trials are also available for patients seeking cutting-edge therapies not yet available to the public.

At the end of the day, it’s all about saving lives.

“It’s rewarding to build long-term relationships with patients,” concludes Levenbach. “We’re proud to have created a place where they feel comfortable.”



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