



Breast Cancer and Environment – Peer Education Tool Kit
Zero Breast Cancer – Adolescent Education Project

Top Twelve Breast Cancer and Environment Messages for Teens

Breast Cancer *very rarely* occurs in teens or young adults. A woman in the Bay Area who lives to age 85 has a 1 in 7 lifetime risk (chance) of developing breast cancer.

The breast is a (mammary) gland that grows and develops rapidly in girls from age 8 – 17.

Breast cancer begins when normal cells start to change and grow out of control. *Breast cancer is like a puzzle* – many factors are thought to play a role in how this disease develops.

Men can develop breast cancer but *it is rare* - less than 1% of cases. All men have a small amount of breast tissue.

A *risk factor* is anything that *increases your chance* of getting a disease; it is not the same as the *cause*. The two main risk factors for breast cancer are *being a woman and growing older*.

Having a *family history*, a *genetic susceptibility*, or a *personal history* of breast cancer *does increase the overall risk* of breast cancer for certain individuals.

Lifestyle factors” related to breast cancer - such as physical activity, diet, tobacco and alcohol use are also known as “*modifiable*” – risk factors that you can do something about.

Adolescent girls, who are *physically active, maintain healthy diets* and who *avoid tobacco smoke* may be able to influence *some* of their long-term individual risks for breast cancer.

Being informed of *suspected environmental factors* for breast cancer helps people to use caution and make informed decisions involving their daily life exposures. Reading labels for suspected cancer-related chemicals in personal care and household products, and avoiding their use, is one example of the *precautionary approach*.

***Early detection*, also known as breast health practices, refers to breast exams for younger women and routine mammograms for middle-aged and older women.**

Treatments may include radiation, “chemo-therapy”, removal of the cancerous tissue in a confined area (“lump-ectomy”), or surgical removal of the breast (“mast-ectomy”) to save a woman’s life. Breasts can be re-constructed to a normal shape.

By taking action to reduce exposures suspected for breast cancer, a teen girl today may reduce some of her lifetime risks for this disease. By practicing healthy behaviors, young adults can reduce their overall risk for breast cancer and other future health problems.