

# VitaMin

Vital health information in a minute!

## Think Pink

*October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month*

What started 25 years ago as a weeklong event with two founding members has evolved into a nationwide campaign dedicated to increasing awareness about the importance of the early detection of breast cancer.

The reason for this level of attention? The earlier breast cancer is detected, the better it may be for the patient's long-term health. Here's a brief overview of three tests that can help detection.

### Breast Self-Exam

Do you do regular breast self-exams? While some cancers are too tiny to feel and most lumps aren't cancer, self-exams are a proactive way to take care of yourself.

### Clinical Breast Exam

A clinical breast exam is a breast exam performed by a health care professional. It's a basic part of women's check-ups, starting at age 20.

### Mammogram

A mammogram is a special type of X-ray taken to look for abnormal growths or changes in breast tissue. It's a key tool in breast cancer detection, though no test is perfect. Most abnormal mammogram results aren't breast cancer. But more testing is needed to make sure. Don't panic, but do get the follow-up tests. For women at normal risk of breast cancer, it's recommended that mammograms start at age 40. Women with a higher risk due to issues like a family history of breast cancer may want to talk to their doctors about earlier screening or additional tests.

These preventive care guidelines are taken from recommendations of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and other recognized authorities on preventive care.

### Symptoms of Breast Cancer?

Performing breast self-exams can make you aware of some of the signs and symptoms of cancer:

- A lump or thickening in or near the breast or underarm that persists for more than a month.
- A mass or lump, which may feel as small as a pea.
- A change in the size, shape or contour of the breast.
- Fluid discharge from the nipple.
- A change in the feel or appearance of the skin on the breast or nipple.
- An area that is distinctly different from any other area on either breast.

Not every lump or irregularity means cancer, but when something new appears, let your doctor know right away.

Source: WebMD Health News

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