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Early signs to identify Breast Cancer

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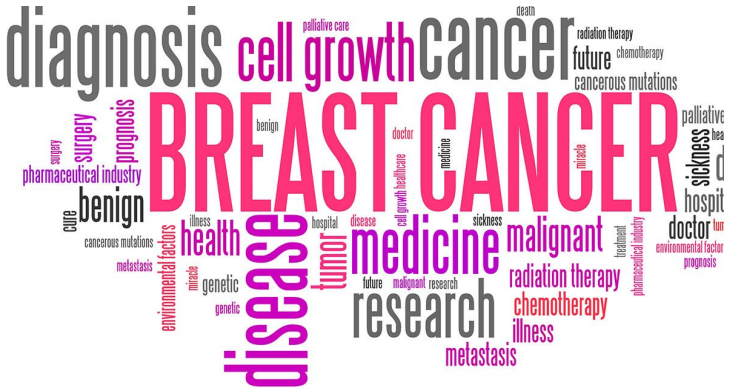

Alarming facts by the Indian Council of Medical Research stated that India might record over 17 lakh new cases of cancer by 2020, of which breast cancer alone accounts for around 27 per cent of cases among women. Statistics also show that for

every two newly diagnosed women with breast cancer, one will die in India. There are also rising number of breast cancer patients in younger age groups, especially those between 30-40. Hence it is of utmost importance to understand your breast's health, and undergo routine checkups for a higher chance of successful treatment.

The appearance and shape of your breasts reveal a lot about their health, and are the most important aspects in identifying cancers. every woman's body is unique and one would know their own body better than anyone else. For this reason it is important to regularly examine your breast by looking into the mirror and by feeling for new changes. Pay particular attention to lumps and any new development. This is critical to avoid missing an early lesion, and hence diagnosing an early breast cancer. Remember, earlier the diagnosis, more the likelihood of cure.

One of the most common symptoms of breast cancer is the presence of a lump or mass in the breasts, which did not previously exist. If you find yourself feeling a painless, hard lump with irregular edges, chances are, it could be malignant. It may just feel like a hard knot or even as a thickening that is new. Even if you experience painful lumps, it is important to get it checked by regular mammograms and other screening tests, which can help identify breast cancer in its early stages.

Some of the other signs and symptoms of breast cancer to look out for are:

- New pain in the nipples or breasts that does not go away
- Swelling across the breast, or in a part of it. Warmth, redness or darkening of the breast should be probed
- Irritation of the skin: itchy, scaly sore or rash on breast, dimpling of the skin
- Retraction of the nipples
- Redness around the nipples "eczema" like appearance
- Thickening of the nipple or breast skin: may appear like orange peel
- Discharge from the nipples that is not breast milk and starts suddenly. It may be bloody or muddy, dirty or greenish

Besides this, breast cancer can also spread to lymph nodes under the arm or close to the collar bone and cause there to be a lump or swelling, even before the tumour in the breast can be felt. Thus, it is advisable to get swollen lymph nodes immediately checked by a medical professional.

If you find yourself experiencing pain in your breasts, which includes both occasional throbbing and fluctuating discomfort, it is advisable to consult a medical practitioner at the earliest. While many women assume that it is merely the presence of an isolated lump that suggests breast cancer, the truth is that it can also manifest itself as scattered seed-like tumours that spread like tentacles across the breast tissue.

As a result of medical advancements, cancer tumour cells in the blood can now be more accurately detected using a malarial protein, VAR2CSA that sticks to cancer cells. This can be used as a cheap, effective screening test to identify early stage breast cancer with just a blood sample. This new research by UNSW Sydney and University of Copenhagen is eagerly awaited as a screening method in the near future.

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