

# Honoring National Breast Cancer Awareness Month: Tips to Take Charge of Your Breast Health

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*believe*

*fight*  
**CAN***cer*

*Hope*

**survivor**

O'FALLON – October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time to reaffirm our commitment to fighting breast cancer and to remind ourselves and others the importance of prevention and early detection.

Breast cancer can develop in women of every age, race, and ethnic group. According to the American Cancer Society, more than 200,000 women will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer this year, and approximately 40,000 women will die. Breast cancer in men is not as common, but it does happen, affecting about 2,000 American men each year. Fortunately, the death rate for those diagnosed with breast cancer has decreased significantly due to early detection.

“Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in women in America, but it’s also one of the most treatable when detected early,” said Jacqueline Owens, MHA, BS, RDMS, director of radiology at St. Elizabeth’s. “Each woman should take time out of her busy schedule to take care of herself and get essential screenings.”

HSHS St. Elizabeth’s Hospital encourages women to take charge of their breast health by following these important breast cancer prevention tips:

**Self-check.** Starting at age 20, women should do a monthly self-breast exam. Visit <http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/breast-self-exam> for more information.

**See your physician regularly.** Women ages 20-40 should have a breast exam by a physician or nurse practitioner every three years, and annually thereafter. If you are high risk because of family or personal history, then you should see a physician every six months starting at age 25.

**Get a Mammogram.** Mammograms should be done every one to two years for women age 40 or older and begin at age 30 if you are at high risk.

**Know your family history.** Women who have a first-degree relative or other close relatives who have had breast cancer may be at increased risk of developing these cancers. When determining your risk due to a family history, it is important to look at the number of women and/or men in your family who have been diagnosed and the age at which they were diagnosed. Talk to your physician about your family history and discuss what you should be doing for prevention and screening.

**Breastfeed.** Women who breast-feed their babies for at least a year in total have a reduced risk of developing breast cancer later in life.

**Develop healthy habits.** Eat low-fat foods and lots of fruits and vegetables. Stay close to the weight your doctor says is right for you and exercise regularly. An increased physical activity, even when begun later in life, reduces overall breast-cancer risk by about 10 percent to 30 percent. Limit alcohol intake to no more than one drink a day and refrain from tobacco use.

If you are diagnosed with breast cancer, your physician will likely recommend a combination of treatments depending on the type of cancer, the stage of the cancer and your overall health. Common ways of treating breast cancer include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy and immunotherapy.

To schedule your mammogram at any of St. Elizabeth's three, convenient imaging locations, call 618-222-4639 or use our easy, online scheduling tool through MyChart (<https://www.hshs.org/StElizabeths/MyChart>) to make an appointment. You can also learn more about the women's health services offered at HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital at [www.steliz.org](http://www.steliz.org).

To learn more about breast cancer prevention, visit <https://www.cancer.org/breastcancer>.