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Health Matters: Self-Breast Exams

Triston Sanders - Medical Anchor

Early detection of breast cancer greatly improves the likelihood that treatment will be successful. One of those important tests to find early breast cancer is completely free of charge.

In this Health Matters, we take a look at how important self-breast exams are in the fight against breast cancer.

Women should start lifesaving self breast exams in their 20s. Oncologist Eric Rost says these exams should be done once a month and during a certain time of the month.

"Around the same time of the month as their cycle because the breast will go through a monthly cycle with menstruation. It only takes a few minutes, but it's very important," he says.

Before you start your exam, you need to know what it is you will be looking for.

"Any wrinkles or dimpling of the skin. Any nipple retraction or skin changes. Any firm lumps that are usually painless but can be painful too, but any strange deviation or lump inside the breast."

Once you know what you will be looking for, knowing how to perform the exam is just as important. It's a skill to learn to examine both lightly on your breast and also more deep palpations to see what's in the middle. Apply a little bit of firm, rolling smooth pressure.

When you check your breast, if you have questions, that's where your doctor can help explain what you're feeling. If there's something that's questionable, it's important not to put it off, talk to your doctor right away.

"Please remember that over 95 percent of all abnormalities felt in the breast are normal. We want to find those few ones. Early detection is one of the most important things in being cured from breast cancer."

Self-breast exams are one of the most powerful, cheapest and most effective tools you can have for finding an abnormality in your breast.

For more information on how to perform self-breast exams, talk to your doctor or you can call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.

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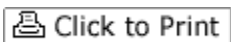
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