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 Breast **15** OCT 2024
Health Day



THE IMPORTANCE OF Breast Health

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women worldwide, with an estimated 2.3 million new cases and over 666,000 deaths every year. In the WHO Europe region every year there are an estimated 605,000 new cases and 160,000 deaths due to breast cancer. *

Why Breast Health Day?

Europa Donna established Breast Health Day as an **annual appointment on 15 October** to remind girls and women in Europe about:

- The importance of lifestyle factors that can influence their future breast health and help prevent breast cancer
- The role of early detection in fighting breast cancer
- The annual Breast Health Day campaign reminds women that engaging in physical activity, maintaining a normal body weight, and eating a healthy diet can help protect their breast health.
- This initiative is aligned with the European Union's mission to improve the member states' ability to address cancer. This includes Europe's Beating Cancer Plan (EBCP), which has prevention as its first pillar and outlines key strategies to tackle the 40% of cancer cases in Europe that are preventable.



Breast Health Day aims to increase awareness of what women can do to protect their future breast health, including:



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY *at all ages*

There is growing scientific evidence that being physically active is linked with a lower risk of developing breast cancer. Being physically active for more than 30 minutes a day could reduce breast cancer risk by 20%, whereas prolonged sedentary activity (eg, being inactive at work) can increase the risk.

→ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR BREAST HEALTH

Engage in moderate exercise for at least 30-60 minutes every day. Remember that physical activity is not only sport, but also walking, gardening, activity at work, housework, dancing, etc.

AVOIDING OBESITY *and being overweight*

Being overweight (Body Mass Index - BMI of 25 and over) or obese (BMI of 30 or higher) can lead to an increased risk of developing post-menopausal breast cancer. Maintaining a healthy weight throughout life could reduce the risk of postmenopausal breast cancer by 50%.

→ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR BREAST HEALTH

Stay fit and maintain a Body Mass Index (BMI) between 18.5 and 24.9

- Calculating your Body Mass Index (BMI):
BMI= weight in kilograms divided by height in metres squared



HEALTHY DIET *and eating well*

While studies have not linked specific diets to breast cancer risk, it is important to eat a balanced diet. There is evidence that a Mediterranean-style diet is protective, while a high intake of ultra-processed foods may increase the risk.

ALCOHOL *consumption*

There is a link between the consumption of any type of alcohol and an increased risk of breast cancer. Studies show that eliminating alcohol or reducing intake to less than 1 serving a day lowers the risk.

→ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR BREAST HEALTH

- Eat a well-balanced diet high in fibre and low in fat
- Include fresh fruit and vegetables in your daily food choices
- Eat the right amount to maintain a healthy weight
- Limit consumption of red meat and processed meats
- Avoid highly processed foods and those containing industrial trans fats
- Avoid food and drinks high in sugar content
- Limit alcohol intake. Not drinking alcohol is better for cancer prevention



MAMMOGRAPHY *screening*

Mammography is widely accepted as the best method to detect breast cancer early, before it becomes palpable. Nationwide population-based programmes set up in accordance with the standards established by the European Commission Initiative on Breast Cancer (ECIBC) help to detect breast cancer at its earliest stages. This increases a woman's chances of survival and can reduce the need for certain more aggressive therapies. Guidelines and recommendations developed by the ECIBC are updated regularly based on emerging evidence.

→ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR BREAST HEALTH

- Get information about and access to appropriate breast screening programmes
- If you are between the ages of 45 and 74, you should participate in mammography screening offered by your public health system and set up according to the ECIBC standards mentioned above
- Ask your doctor about the mammography screening programme available in your country
- Become familiar with your breasts and talk to your doctor without delay if you notice changes or abnormalities
- If you have a family history of breast cancer arrange regular check-ups with your physician, including regular imaging tests, and discuss the possibilities for genetic testing and counselling
- If you know from previous screening tests that you have dense breast tissue, you should discuss with your physician the use of other imaging methods such as digital breast tomosynthesis
- Avoid smoking, as some studies indicate an increased risk of breast cancer later in life, particularly among young women who smoke

**Source for incidence and mortality data:*

Ferlay J, Ervik M, Lam F, Laversanne M, Colombet M, Mery L, Piñeros M, Znaor A, Soerjomataram I, Bray F (2024). *Global Cancer Observatory: Cancer Today*. Lyon, France: International Agency for Research on Cancer. Available from: <https://gco.iarc.who.int/today>.

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