



Top Compliance (Pty) Ltd

Occupational Health and Safety

Your business' safety is our concern

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Breast Cancer Awareness for Men and Women

Breast cancer is the most common cancer worldwide, affecting millions of people each year. While it is often viewed as a “women’s disease,” it is important to understand that men can also develop breast cancer. Although the percentage of cases among men is small roughly 1% of all breast cancer diagnoses, the risk is real, and because awareness is lower, men are often diagnosed at a later stage when the cancer has already spread. For women, breast cancer accounts for about one in every three cancer diagnoses, making it the most common cancer after skin cancer.

The growing number of cases each year highlights the urgent need for awareness, education, prevention, and early detection. When caught in the early stages, breast cancer is highly treatable, and survival rates are significantly higher. For this reason, campaigns such as Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October are vital reminders to prioritize self-care and regular screenings.

Age of diagnosis and increasing incidence

Breast cancer can affect people at any age, though it is more common as we grow older. In women, most cases are diagnosed after the age of 50, with the highest risk between the ages of 55 and 64. However, a concerning trend is that younger women are increasingly being diagnosed, sometimes as early as their 30s and 40s. This rise may be linked to lifestyle factors such as obesity, poor diet, lack of exercise, and increased alcohol use, alongside better detection through mammography and other screening tools.

For men, the average age of diagnosis is slightly older, typically between 60 and 70 years. Because men have smaller amounts of breast tissue, the disease can spread more quickly, and it is often not suspected until it is advanced. This delay contributes to poorer outcomes for men, making it essential to break the stigma and educate men about their own risk.

Warning signs and symptoms

One of the most powerful tools in fighting breast cancer is awareness of the early warning signs. Both men and women should be vigilant for the following:

- A lump or hard mass in the breast or underarm that feels different from the surrounding tissue.
- Swelling of part or all of the breast, even if no lump is felt.
- Changes in breast size, contour, or shape.
- Nipple changes, such as inversion (turning inward), persistent pain, redness, or unusual discharge, especially if it is bloody.

- Skin changes, including dimpling, puckering, peeling, or a thickened texture that resembles the skin of an orange.
- Persistent or unexplained breast pain or tenderness.

In men, the most common symptom is a painless lump directly under the nipple or areola. Because men are less likely to consider the possibility of breast cancer, they may delay medical attention, giving the cancer more time to progress.

The message is simple: if you notice any unusual changes in your breast tissue, whether you are a man or a woman, consult your healthcare professional as soon as possible. Early action saves lives.

Treatment options and advances

The treatment of breast cancer has evolved significantly over the years, offering patients more options and better chances of recovery. Treatment depends on several factors: the stage of cancer at diagnosis, whether it has spread, and the patient's overall health.

- **Surgery:** In early cases, the tumour may be removed through a lumpectomy (removal of the lump and surrounding tissue), or the entire breast may be removed through mastectomy. Some patients may also need lymph node removal if the cancer has spread.
- **Radiation therapy:** Often used after surgery to kill remaining cancer cells, radiation uses high-energy waves to target affected areas.
- **Chemotherapy:** Anti-cancer drugs are used to stop the growth of cancer cells. This may be given before surgery to shrink tumours or after surgery to prevent recurrence.
- **Hormone therapy:** Many breast cancers are fuelled by hormones like estrogen or progesterone. Hormone-blocking drugs help prevent cancer growth in these cases.
- **Targeted therapy and immunotherapy:** Newer approaches aim directly at cancer cells while sparing healthy tissue, reducing side effects and improving outcomes.

Many patients receive a combination of these treatments. Supportive care, counselling, and rehabilitation are also important in helping patients and their families cope physically and emotionally during recovery.

The role of diet and lifestyle

Lifestyle choices play a major role not only in prevention but also in recovery. A growing body of research suggests that a diet low in sugar, refined carbohydrates, and processed foods may reduce the risk of developing breast cancer. High sugar intake can lead to obesity, inflammation, and increased insulin levels all factors that may encourage cancer growth.

Instead, aim for a diet rich in:

- **Fruits and vegetables:** Packed with antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals that protect cells.
- **Whole grains:** Provide fibre that supports digestive health and helps regulate hormones.
- **Lean protein:** Fish, poultry, beans, and legumes help repair and maintain body tissues.
- **Healthy fats:** Omega-3 fatty acids from nuts, seeds, and fish may reduce inflammation.

Regular physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, limiting alcohol, and avoiding smoking all significantly reduce cancer risk. For cancer survivors, these habits can also improve recovery and lower the chance of recurrence.

The importance of self-evaluation and screening

Self-examination is a vital habit that can lead to early detection. Women should perform a self-breast exam once a month, ideally a few days after menstruation when breast tissue is least tender. The exam should include both looking (checking in the mirror for changes in size, shape, or skin texture) and feeling (palpating the breast and underarm for lumps or unusual thickening).

Men should also become familiar with the feel of their chest tissue and check for any changes during routine activities, such as showering. While self-exams are not foolproof, they are an essential first step in noticing changes early.

In addition to self-exams, regular screening is crucial:

- Women aged 40 and older should discuss mammogram schedules with their doctor, with most guidelines recommending screening every one to two years.
- Those with a strong family history of breast cancer, or carrying genetic mutations such as BRCA1 or BRCA2, may need earlier and more frequent screenings.
- Men with a family history of breast or prostate cancer should speak to their healthcare provider about their personal risk and possible screening options.

How to do a monthly Self-Breast Examination (SBE)

When to check:

- Women: Once a month, a few days after your period ends (when breasts are least swollen or tender).
- Men: Pick the same day each month as a reminder.

Step 1: Look in the mirror

- Stand with your shoulders straight and arms on your hips.
- Check for:
 - Changes in breast size, shape, or symmetry.
 - Skin changes: dimpling, puckering, redness, or thickening.
 - Nipple changes: inversion (turning inward), rash, discharge, or sores.

Repeat with arms raised above your head to see if any changes appear.

Step 2: Check while standing (or in the shower)

- Raise one arm behind your head.
- Use the opposite hand to feel the breast with the pads of your three middle fingers.
- Move in small, circular motions covering the entire breast, from collarbone to the top of the abdomen, and from the armpit to the centre of the chest.
- Apply different pressure levels:
 - Light pressure: surface tissue.
 - Medium pressure: middle tissue.
 - Firm pressure: deep tissue near the chest wall and ribs.

Step 3: Check lying down

- Place a pillow under your right shoulder and put your right arm behind your head.
- Using your left hand, repeat the circular motion technique across your right breast and armpit area.
- Switch sides and repeat for the left breast.

Step 4: Nipple check

- Gently squeeze each nipple between your finger and thumb.
- Look for discharge, especially bloody or unusual fluid.

What to do if you find a change

- Most breast changes are not cancer, but do not ignore them.
- Contact a healthcare professional promptly for further examination.

Self-exams do not replace regular medical screenings (like mammograms), but they help you become familiar with your own body so you can spot changes early.

Some YouTube videos that you may find helpful:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDpK8z4SMhw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcg7jWrlIJ8>

<https://cansa.org.za/video-do-your-monthly-breast-self-examination-to-beat-breast-cancer-cansa/>

Empowerment through awareness

Breast cancer awareness is not just about wearing pink during October it is about education, support, and action every day of the year. Knowing the risks, recognizing symptoms, and making healthy lifestyle choices all contribute to prevention and early detection. Equally important is supporting those affected by breast cancer, whether through emotional encouragement, community involvement, or promoting access to healthcare and resources.

By talking openly about breast cancer, we reduce stigma, encourage timely medical help, and empower both men and women to take control of their health.

Breast cancer does not discriminate by gender or age. It can affect men and women, young and old, the healthy and the vulnerable. The good news is that with modern medicine, early detection, and healthier lifestyles, survival rates are improving every year. Your role in this fight is to remain vigilant: know your body, check regularly, seek medical advice if you notice changes, and encourage loved ones to do the same.

Together, through awareness and proactive action, we can fight breast cancer and save countless lives.

Remember: October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, but prevention and awareness must be practiced daily. Schedule your check-up, eat well, exercise regularly, and take that step toward a healthier future.

Should you require further assistance or advice feel free to email us on info@topcompliance.co.za

Yours in Health and Safety

 A hand holding a magnifying glass over a document. The text 'Safety Auditing' is inside the magnifying glass. To the right, a list of terms: SAFETY & HEALTH, BEST PRACTICE, RESPONSIBILITY, AWARENESS, COMPLIANCE, STANDARDS, COMMITTEE. To the left, a list of terms: AUDIT, POLICY, GUIDELINES, REGULATION.		 A red shopping cart icon next to the text 'SHOP ONLINE' with a mouse cursor arrow pointing at it.		
Occupational health and safety auditing and consulting		Online safety shop		
 A green circle containing a white icon of two overlapping documents.	 A blue circle containing a white icon of a stethoscope and a first aid kit.	 A red circle containing a white icon of a downward-pointing arrow.	 A purple circle containing a white icon of a document with a magnifying glass over it.	 An orange circle containing a white icon of safety gear: a hard hat, safety glasses, and a respirator.
Appointments, checklists and templates	First aid equipment	Signage	Legal posters	Safety Equipment

Courses offered by Top Compliance (Pty) Ltd

ONLINE ACADEMY - https://academy.topcompliance.co.za/		
Occupational Health and Safety Courses	Online	Onsite Excluding travel
Safety representative – Legal Liability	R980.00	R1300.00
The Occupational Health and Safety Act & responsibilities of management – Legal Liability	R1250.00	R 1730.00
Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	R735.00	R875.00
Food facility health & safety course in terms of R638	R735.00	R875.00
Basic Ladder Safety Course	R735.00	R875.00
Fire Fighting and Prevention Courses		
Fire Marshal - Basic firefighting	R735.00	R875.00
Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning	R810.00	R950.00
First aid		
Level 1 - US 119567 - Perform basic life support and first aid procedures – THEORY MODULE	R400.00	-

ONLINE ACADEMY - https://academy.topcompliance.co.za/		
Occupational Health and Safety Courses		
Safety representative – Legal Liability		
The Occupational Health and Safety Act & responsibilities of management – Legal Liability		
Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment		
Food facility health & safety course in terms of R638		
Basic Ladder Safety Course		
Fire Fighting and Prevention Courses		
Fire Marshal - Basic firefighting		
Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning		

ONSITE TRAINING	
First Aid Courses:	
Level 1 - US 119567 - Perform basic life support and first aid procedures	2 days
Level 2 - US 120496 - Provide risk-based primary emergency care/first aid in the workplace	3 days
Level 3 - US 376480 - Provide first aid as an advanced first responder	3 days
Level 1 & 2 - US 119567 & 120496	3 days
Level 1, 2 & 3 - US 119567, 120496 & 376480	5 days
Level 2 & 3 - US 120496 & 376480	3 days
Child and infant CPR & choking	6 hours
Adult CPR & choking	6 hours
Adult CPR & choking and AED	1 day
Occupational Health and Safety Courses	
Safety representative – Legal Liability	1 day
The Occupational Health and Safety Act & responsibilities of management – Legal Liability	1 day
Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	1 day
Food facility health & safety course in terms of R638	6 hours

Basic Ladder Safety	6 hours
Fire Fighting and Prevention Courses	
Fire Marshal - Basic firefighting	6 hours
Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning	1 day