



WOMEN'S HEALTH

More Than A Mammogram: Know The Essentials Of Breast Cancer Testing

(NAPSA)—Most women know that it's very important to check their breasts for lumps and schedule regular mammograms. But Dr. Marisa Weiss, President and Founder of breastcancer.org and Director of Breast Radiation Oncology at Lankenau Hospital, believes it is important for women to be familiar with the tests available to diagnose breast cancer as early as possible:

- **Breast Self Exam (BSE) and Physical Exam:** Knowing your own body is the first defense against breast cancer. Conduct regular self exams and contact your doctor if you notice any new lumps or changes in your breast that are getting bigger or lasting longer than a month. Your doctor will also do a breast exam on a regular basis to check for any abnormal changes.

- **Mammogram:** Mammograms have been shown to reduce the risk of dying from breast cancer by 25 to 35 percent. The National Cancer Institute recommends that women get an annual mammogram after the age of 40. For women with a high risk of breast cancer based on family history or past medical conditions, a mammogram may be recommended at an earlier age. This test should be combined with physical exams to catch breast cancer as early as possible.

- **Biopsy:** If your doctor orders



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a biopsy, this doesn't automatically mean that you have breast cancer. Eight out of 10 biopsies find no cancerous cells. If your doctor does find cancerous cells, the biopsy will help them determine what type of cancer you have and how to best begin treatment.

- **BRCA Testing:** About 5-10 percent of breast cancers are due to an abnormal BRCA gene. Each year, about ten to twenty thousand women are identified as having an abnormality in these genes, and they are much more likely to develop breast cancer during their lives. If you have a strong family history of breast or ovarian cancers, ask your doctor about getting the BRCA gene test.

If you are diagnosed with breast cancer, Dr. Weiss recommends you talk to your doctor about getting special tests on the cancer to figure out the best course of treatment for you:

- **Hormone Receptor Tests:** Some types of breast cancer are known as "hormone-receptor-positive" breast cancer. Some of these types of breast cancer cells have receptors for the hormone estrogen and are called "ER-positive"; others have receptors for the hormone progesterone and are called "PR-positive." Cells that do not have receptors are "negative" for these hormones. About two thirds of women diagnosed with breast cancer have hormone-receptor positive breast cancer.

- **HER2 Tests:** Women with cancers that overexpress the HER2 gene have a more aggressive type of cancer that grows and spreads faster than other cancer types and will respond to treatment differently than those with normal levels of the gene. About one in four women diagnosed with breast cancer will have HER2-positive breast cancer.

All women have a right to the best care possible if they are diagnosed with breast cancer. Know which tests you need and find out how the results may impact your treatment plan. Find out more about breast cancer testing by visiting www.breastcancer.org.