

PEP Talk

A Publication of the Pinellas County Health Department

October 2006

Early Detection Saves Lives

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

More than 211,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed this year in the U.S. Thankfully, progress in technology helps doctors find the disease earlier. And the sooner breast cancer is detected, the less likely a woman will need invasive and uncomfortable treatments, and the more likely she will survive. As a result, breast cancer survivors make up the largest group of cancer survivors.

Mammography screening is the best method of early detection. Therefore, women over age 40 should get an annual mammogram. A clinical examination by a health professional should be done yearly.

You can take charge of your breast health by performing a breast self-exam every month and understanding your personal risks of the disease – and reporting any breast change promptly to your health care provider.



Special populations at risk for breast cancer include minority and older women.

African-American women have a higher breast cancer death rate than women of any other racial or ethnic population.

Many women over the age of 60 feel that screening for breast cancer isn't necessary. On the contrary, women over 60 are more at risk, not less, for breast cancer.

Women 20 years and over should do a monthly breast self-exam, and have their breasts checked once a year by a health care professional. Women over age 40 should have a mammogram once a year.

Studies show that regular breast self-exams, combined with an annual exam by a doctor, improves the chances of detecting cancer early.



Breast Self Exam (BSE)

Examining your breasts every month is an important way to find a breast cancer early, when it's most likely to be cured. Not every cancer can be found this way, but it is an important step you can, and should, take for yourself.

The more you examine your breasts, the more you will learn about them and the easier it will become for you to tell if something unusual has

occurred. BSE is an essential part of taking care of yourself and reducing your risk of breast cancer.

Get in the habit of doing a BSE once a month (post a note on your calendar to help remember). Examine yourself several days after your period ends, when your breasts are least likely to be swollen and tender. If you are no longer having periods, choose a day that's easy to remember, such as the first or last day of the month.

Don't panic if you think you feel a lump. Most women have some lumps or lumpy areas in their breasts all the time. Eight out of ten breast lumps that are removed are benign, non-cancerous.

The upper, outer area – near your armpit – tends to have the most noticeable lumps. The lower half of your breast can feel like a sandy or pebbly beach. The area under the nipple can feel like a collection of large grains. Another part might feel like a lumpy bowl of oatmeal.

What's important is that you get to know the look and feel of your breasts. Has anything changed? Tell your doctor about any changes in your breasts that last over a full month's cycle, or seem to get worse or more obvious over time.

For more info, call us or visit www.cancer.org



The Pinellas County Health Department's Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program provides free breast and cervical cancer screening exams – including mammograms, Pap smears and pelvic and clinical breast exams – to women 50 to 64 years of age (low income, uninsured or under-insured). Please call (727) 824-6917 to schedule an appointment.

Hands are for holding, not hitting.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Domestic violence is an epidemic that has an effect on everyone. It is a pattern of abusive behaviors used to gain power and control over an intimate partner, and it often leads to the threat or use of violence.

Domestic abuse is not a disagreement, a marital spat or an anger management problem. It can occur in long-term or short-term relationships. Domestic abuse affects people of all cultures, religions, ages, sexual orientations, educational backgrounds and income levels

Domestic abuse takes many forms. Abuse is any controlling, hurtful act, word or gesture that injures another's body or emotions.

Not all domestic violence is physical. Here are examples of abusive behaviors that you may recognize in your own intimate relationship or in a friend's intimate relationship.

Verbal Abuse – Partner says things to shame, ridicule or insult you (or your friend), such as:

- You're stupid, fat, ugly, etc.
- You'll never get a job.
- You're an unfit parent.

- You don't deserve anything.
- Who would want you?

Emotional/Psychological/Mental Abuse – Partner does any of the following:

- Accuses you of having affairs
- Keeps you from family and friends
- Confuses you with promises and lies
- Takes your keys or damage your car
- Takes or destroys important papers

Abuse of the Family Pet – Does your partner alarm you or make you feel uncomfortable by mistreating your pet?

- Doesn't allow the pet to receive care and food
- Intentionally hits, kicks or throws the pet
- Injures pet as a threat to you or your children

Financial Abuse - Does your partner control your ability to access money?

- Forbids you to work
- Forbids you to have money unless it is for a specific purchase
- Requires that you give up your paycheck



Sexual Abuse - Does your partner do the following...?

- Forces you to have sex
- Forces you into unwanted sexual practices
- Criticizes your sexual performance
- Forces you to have sex with others
- Withholds sex and affection as a way to manipulate your behavior

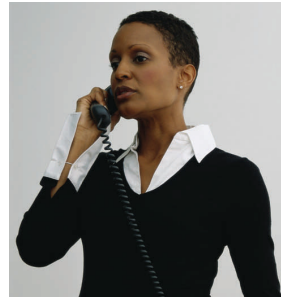
Ten Things Families and Friends Can Do

From: *To Be and Anchor in the Storm, A Guide for Families and*

Friends of Abused Women by Susan Brewster.

1. Believe her. Most battered women don't lie or exaggerate their abuse.
2. Recognize that emotional abuse is truly abuse.
3. Open ears; shut mouth. You can't be listening when you are talking.
4. Respect her decisions; don't judge her. Don't give advice; giving advice tends to take away her power.
5. Ask open-ended questions. Ask her to clarify what you don't understand. Try to understand not just the words she speaks, but what she is attempting to convey to you – the meaning between the lines.
6. Be a mirror. Reflect her statements back to her. This lets her know you are really listening and trying to understand her.
7. Speak only for yourself, not for her. Express only your feelings and observations, not your beliefs.
8. Support without over-controlling. Control yourself, not her.
9. Be patient. Establishing trust can't be forced.
10. If she lives in South Pinellas County, give her CASA's phone number, 727-895-4912. In North Pinellas, she can call The Haven at 442-4128. Outside Pinellas, call 800-799-SAFE (7233).

Note: Female gender is used above because domestic abuse is predominately waged against women. However, domestic abuse affects people of all cultures, religions, ages, sexual orientations, educational backgrounds and income levels



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