

GUMC HEALTH AWARENESS INITIATIVE OCTOBER 2021

October is National Breast Cancer and Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Breast Cancer:

Breast Cancer COVID-19 has impacted breast cancer screening and diagnosis rates. Less women have sought screening mammography this year. In some studies, this decline has been as high as 80% when compared to 2019. It's estimated that over 280,000 new breast cancer cases will be diagnosed in the United States in 2021. It is the second leading cause of cancer death in U.S. women behind lung cancer.

Dr. Avis Artis, MD, a retired OB/GYN states, "Now that imaging centers are back open, missed or delayed appointments should be rescheduled! Mammography is the most effective screening tool for breast cancer. Following lung cancer, breast cancer is the second most frequent cancer diagnosed worldwide. It is the leading cause of cancer death in women worldwide and the second leading cause of death in women in the US." Approximately 1 in 8 women will be diagnosed with Breast Cancer in their lifetime. The National Cancer Institute estimates that 279,480 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year. Most will survive due to early detection and treatment.

Risk Factors for Breast Cancer:

- ◆ Age: Most are diagnosed after age 50
- ◆ Genetics: Mutations of BRCA1 AND BRCA2 genes
- ◆ Reproductive history: early onset of menses and late menopause
- ◆ Dense breast tissue
- ◆ Personal or Family history of breast cancer
- ◆ Previous radiation to the chest.

Alterable Risk Factors:

- Obesity—especially after menopause
- Limit use of postmenopausal hormone replacement to less than five years
- Breastfeed children
- Full-term pregnancy before age 30
- Decrease alcohol intake, in addition to mammogram screening as recommended by your health care provider. All women should perform monthly breast exams and have an annual breast exam performed by their health care provider.

If you have breast cancer risk factors, it is recommended that you talk with your doctor about ways to lower your risk and about screening for breast cancer. So, when you see a pink ribbon signifying Breast Cancer Awareness Month, it's not only a chance to support those battling breast cancer, it's an opportunity for you to remind yourself of the risk factors and risk-reduction strategies. The most important prevention steps you can take are to: Be familiar with your breasts, and promptly report any changes to your health care provider; Be aware of any cancer history in your family and discuss it with your health care provider; Follow the screening recommendations pertaining to your age and breast cancer risk; and, Stay active and exercise.

Domestic Violence: Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) is a national campaign dedicated to raising awareness about domestic violence. Every October, organizations and individuals unite across the country for a national effort to uplift the needs, voices, and experiences of survivors. Congress declared the month of October to be Domestic Violence Awareness Month in 1989.

Domestic Abuse, also referred to as Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), is a serious and preventable public health problem affecting more than 32 million Americans. It affects all people, women more than men. In the US, from 22-39% of women report experiencing abuse in an intimate relationship. Domestic violence takes place in our nation every minute of every day, occurring just about every 15 seconds. Another alarming statistic for us to look at is that as many as 3 out of 4 Americans know of another person that has, or is being abused by another individual, but a lot of times nothing is done about it.

Most Americans don't realize just how real domestic violence is and how many lives are affected by it. Most of these cases are left behind closed doors. That's why the Domestic Violence Awareness Month was introduced to not only educate and raise that awareness but bring the support and strength that domestic violence victims need.

Isolation is a large risk factor in domestic violence. The abuser uses violence to maintain power and control over their partner and their environment. Intimate partner violence (IPV) describes actual or threatened psychological, physical, or sexual harm by a current or former partner or spouse. IPV can occur among people of all gender identities and does not require sexual intimacy.

The purple ribbon is used for a number of other important causes, but it's also in honor of domestic violence victims and support for the growing awareness.

Domestic violence is usually done in secret, but let's shout it from the rooftops. This DVAM and beyond, we must work together, embrace the many cultural ways we can heal from violence and oppression, commit to holding space for survivors, and center those most marginalized in all of our efforts to end domestic violence. Action needs to take place, where an advocate is willing to speak up when others cannot. If you know of someone that is being abused, are you willing to be their voice? It's time that we stand up to domestic violence and tell it "enough is enough."

What Can You Do? •Listen empathetically, •Validate concerns, •Offer Help - Hotlines, Social Worker, Shelter.

For More Information:

- UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center – 1-984-974-8762
- Living Beyond Breast Cancer – 1-888-753-LBCC (5222)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline - 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) / TTY 1-800-787-3224

DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this document is not intended to diagnose, treat, or to be misrepresented as a cure for breast cancer. It is "intended to be used and must be used for informational purposes only" and readers should "take independent medical advice from a their medical professional."

(Some excerpts taken from Community Health Coalition, Inc Health Tip)