



جمعية زهرة
ZAHRA ASSOCIATION



The Beginning of
the Journey:

Awareness



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What is Cancer?

The term "cancer" refers to a collection of related diseases characterized by the abnormal growth and division of cells that lead to the destruction of other healthy cells in the body. Cancer cells can multiply and spread from one organ to another in the human body.

Just as breast cancer begins with the formation of a malignant tumor, which arises from abnormal breast cell growth. These cells divide uncontrollably, forming a tumor or lump that can spread to other parts of the body if not detected and treated early. Breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in the GCC countries and ranks first among women, emphasizing the importance of awareness and early detection.

Symptoms and Diagnosis

Cancer symptoms vary depending on the affected organ; however, the persistence of any symptom for a prolonged period requires medical consultation and should not be ignored, as some signs may indicate an underlying health issue.

As for breast cancer, its symptoms are similar in both women and men and may include the following:

- Lump in the breast
- Nipple discharge
- Changes in the skin
- Retraction of the nipple

Breast cancer is diagnosed through safe and effective procedures aimed at detecting any abnormal changes, as determined by the physician. Diagnostic methods include:

- Clinical breast examination
- Breast X-ray imaging (mammography)
- Ultrasound imaging
- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)
- Tissue sampling (biopsy)

Causes

Breast cancer does not have a specific, direct cause; however, there are several risk factors that may increase the possibility of developing the disease. These factors are categorized into non-modifiable factors and modifiable factors.

Non-modifiable risk factors include:

- **Gender:** Women are at a higher risk of developing breast cancer than men.
- **Age:** The risk of breast cancer increases with age.
- **Early puberty:** Before the age of 12.
- **Late menopause:** After the age of 55.
- **Family history** of breast cancer.

Modifiable risk factors include:

- Not having children or having the first child after the age of 30
- Lack of physical activity
- Obesity
- Smoking

Statistics

Cancer is one of the major health challenges in the Gulf region. Breast cancer ranks first among women both globally and locally. Unfortunately, incidence rates continue to rise due to aging and the increasing prevalence of several modifiable risk

factors such as smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, and unhealthy dietary habits, all of which contribute to higher disease rates.

The most common cancers in the GCC countries include:

- **Breast cancer (16%)**, ranking first among women
- **Colorectal cancer (13%)**, ranking first among men
- **Thyroid cancer (9%)**

Coping with Cancer for the Patient

Receiving a cancer diagnosis can be shocking at first and is often accompanied by feelings of sadness, disbelief, and many life changes. Over time, these feelings may evolve into acceptance and hope. Many fears stem from inaccurate information, while gaining a proper understanding of the disease and available treatment options can help reduce anxiety and promote a sense of reassurance. Hope can be strengthened by organizing daily routines, engaging in enjoyable activities, participating in appropriate physical activity, and setting aside time for stress relief.

Supporting Cancer Patients

The experience of cancer varies from one person to another and may be accompanied by physical, psychological, and social challenges. Support from family and friends plays a vital role in improving the patient's quality of life and helping them focus on treatment and recovery. Social support includes emotional and practical assistance. Recognizing mood changes as a natural part of a cancer diagnosis and offering compassionate support

can make a meaningful impact, particularly for individuals who struggle to seek or receive help.

Here are some tips that may help you support a cancer patient:

Emotional Support:

- Provide continuous support during the diagnosis, treatment, and recovery phases.
- Avoid putting pressure on the patient with phrases like "Be strong" or "Stay positive."
- Respect their journey and don't compare it to anyone else's.
- Listen carefully to the patient's fears and feelings.

Practical Support:

- Offer to help with meal preparation.
- Accompany the patient to hospital appointments.
- Assist with daily tasks they may need help with, such as cleaning or transportation.

The Importance of Early Detection and Prevention

Although cancer cannot be completely prevented, the World Health Organization indicates that %50 - %30 of cases could be avoided. Prevention begins with early detection and regular screenings, along with adopting a healthy lifestyle that can reduce the risk of developing cancer, God willing.

To help prevent breast cancer, the following are recommended:

- Avoid smoking and tobacco products.
- Follow a healthy and balanced diet.
- Engage in regular physical activity.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Avoid using hormonal medications without medical advice.
- Breastfeed, due to its health benefits.
- Have the first child before the age of 30.
- Undergo regular medical check-ups and early screening.
- Early detection helps identify changes or tumors at their earliest stages, making treatment more effective, increasing the chances of recovery, and reducing the risk of complications.

Resources

Ministry of Health

World Health Organization

National Institutes of Health

Cancer Research UK