جمعية زهرة
ZAHRA ASSOCIATION

Ask and Verify

Campaign Guide



Some misconceptions and inaccurate beliefs about breast cancer are common within our communities, and they can influence people's health-related behaviors and decisions. As Zahra Association, our role is to address these misconceptions and provide the community with accurate, reliable, and evidence-based information.

Some might say:

1. "I don't have any symptoms, so I don't need to get screened"

This is one of the most common misconceptions that need to be addressed. Breast cancer may not cause noticeable symptoms in its early stages, which is why regular screening is important. Mammograms can help detect breast cancer before symptoms appear and before the disease progresses.

A screening today can make a difference tomorrow.

2. "There is no history of breast cancer in my family, so I am not at risk"

The absence of a family history may give a woman a false sense of security. Family history is only one of many risk factors for breast cancer, and having no affected relatives does not mean that a woman has no risk of developing the disease.

It is also important to remember that family history includes both the mother's and the father's side of the family.

3. “If I am asked to have additional imaging or tests after my mammogram, it means I have cancer”
Being asked to undergo additional imaging or repeat a mammogram does not necessarily mean that cancer has been found.
Sometimes, the images may not be clear enough, or the radiologist may need additional views to obtain more detailed and accurate images. Further testing is often performed simply to clarify a finding and does not automatically indicate cancer.

4. “If cancer is detected, it means I will need a mastectomy and chemotherapy.”
Breast cancer treatment is not the same for everyone. There are several treatment options, including hormonal therapy, radiation therapy, targeted therapy, chemotherapy, surgery, and other treatments.

The treatment plan depends on several factors, including the size and stage of the tumor, whether it has spread, the characteristics of the cancer, and the patient’s overall health.

In general, when breast cancer is detected at an earlier stage and before it has spread, treatment options may be less extensive and easier to manage. This highlights the importance of regular breast cancer screening and early detection.

5. “It’s better not to know.”
Fear of the result and the anxiety surrounding it may not go away simply by avoiding screening. Do not let fear and anxiety control your decisions or prevent you from taking care of your health.

Identifying a problem early and addressing it is often easier than discovering it after it has progressed.

Think of it like finding a leak in your basement or discovering cockroaches in your storage room. Identifying the problem early and dealing with it before it grows can prevent greater damage.
Early detection does not change what is happening inside the body, but it can change the journey of diagnosis and treatment, making it simpler, more manageable, and giving you more treatment options.

6. “Mammograms are extremely painful, and I won’t be able to tolerate one.”
Some women may experience pressure, discomfort, or pain during a mammogram. This feeling is usually brief and varies from woman to woman.

To reduce discomfort, you can choose an appropriate time for the examination, such as one to two weeks after your menstrual period, when breast tenderness may be lower for many women.
Do not hesitate to tell the radiographer if you experience pain or discomfort and ask for support or assistance during the examination.

The mammogram may be uncomfortable for a few moments but remember that some things in our lives may cause temporary discomfort or pain, such as having blood drawn or receiving a vaccination. We still choose to do them because their benefits and outcomes are more important than the brief discomfort we experience.

A simple examination may be uncomfortable for a few minutes, but it could make a significant difference in your life.

7. "The radiation from a mammogram can cause breast cancer"

A mammogram uses a very low dose of X-ray radiation and is recommended for women within the age groups for whom breast cancer screening is advised.

Research has shown that the benefits of mammography for early detection outweigh the potential risks associated with the very small amount of radiation used.

We are also exposed to natural cosmic radiation throughout our lives, including during air travel, particularly on long-distance flights. While exposure to cosmic radiation increases at higher altitudes, this does not prevent people from traveling because the benefits of air travel outweigh this relatively small exposure.

The same principle applies to mammography: the benefit of detecting breast cancer early is far greater than the very small risk associated with the radiation used during the examination.

8. "A biopsy can cause cancer to spread"
A biopsy is one of the safest and most reliable ways to examine a suspicious lump or abnormal area and determine whether it is cancerous and, if so, identify its type and characteristics.

Research has shown that many breast biopsies do not result in a cancer diagnosis. In one study, 80% of people who underwent a biopsy had benign results.

If the biopsy does confirm cancer, obtaining an accurate diagnosis allows treatment to begin as soon as possible. Early diagnosis and timely treatment can help reduce the risk of cancer progressing.

In some cases, breast cancer may be diagnosed at an advanced stage, such as stage 3 or 4. The progression or spread of the cancer is not caused by the biopsy; rather, it may be related to the cancer itself and delays in detection and diagnosis.

That is why we encourage regular screening and early diagnosis—to identify breast cancer as early as possible and help ensure that the most appropriate treatment plan can be chosen for everyone.