

Swedish Cancer Society Pink Ribbon Campaign to Help Fight Breast Cancer

Every year around 7 000 new cases of breast cancer are diagnosed in Sweden. This means that between 15 and 20 women fall ill every day; about 80 per cent of them are cured. Breast cancer accounts for around 30 per cent of all cancer in women, and is therefore the commonest form of cancer among women.

The Swedish Cancer Society is running its Pink Ribbon campaign during October. The campaign is intended to combat breast cancer by increasing awareness of the disease and collecting funds for continued research. The Swedish Cancer Society is the largest single sponsor of Swedish cancer research. This year we are running the Pink Ribbon campaign for the sixth year in succession.

Where the money goes

The funds raised by the Pink Ribbon campaign are used to fight breast cancer in various ways:

- by spreading information and knowledge, for example on the importance of early discovery
- by financing breast cancer research and basic research that has benefits with regard to all forms of cancer.

Ways of giving support

- Wear the pink ribbon. The ribbon can be bought at ICA, Lindex, the pharmacy and elsewhere. Price SEK 20.
- Make a donation to plusgiro account no. PG 90 1986-0. Mark the paying-in slip “Pink”
- Start a web collection on cancerfonden.se/rosabandet
- Go to the Pink Ribbon Gala at Globen, Stockholm, on 28 October. Tickets cost SEK 195 and are sold on ticnet.se

Get to know your breasts!

Some 7 000 cases of breast cancer are diagnosed in Sweden every year. The risk of you personally being affected is one in nine. Before the age of 30 the disease is rare. You can yourself help to make sure that the disease is discovered early if it occurs. So examine your breasts regularly. Do not hesitate to go to a doctor as soon as you notice any change in the breast: a lump, hardening, puckering of the skin.

In most parts of Sweden women over 40 years old are called in for mammography (breast x-ray) every couple of years. The National Board of Health and Welfare recommends mammography for women aged between 40 and 74. If you have close relatives who have had breast cancer at a younger age this may sometimes be a reason for examination by mammography/ultrasound before the age of 40. Ask your general practitioner to refer you to a clinic for hereditary cancer in this case.

How to do it...

Pick a specific date every month – a date you will easily remember. If you are menstruating, the day after the end of your period is suitable. The breasts are then soft and easier to examine.

Look at the breasts in the mirror



Lift your arms above your head and look for changes:

- Do the breasts have their usual shape?
- Is the skin smooth and of its usual colour?
- Do the nipples look as usual and do they rise when you lift your arms?

Lie down...



Put your left hand under your head, so that the breast and armpit are free. A cushion under the shoulder may help to spread the breast more evenly.

...and feel



Feel all over the left breast and armpit with the right hand. Straight fingers, light pressure. Small circular movements several times around the breast. Begin with the nipple. Move the fingers outwards a centimetre or so and describe a small circle. Continue circle by circle until the whole breast has been examined. Finish up in the armpit. Go over to the right breast.

- How do the breasts feel?
- Any lump or hard area?
- Are the size and firmness of the breasts as usual?

After soaping in the shower



You will feel unevenness and any lumps in the breasts more easily when they are soapy and the fingers slide easily over the skin. Feel through the breasts in the same way as when lying down.

Facts about breasts

- All breasts are to some degree uneven. Particularly when young and in the week before a period. Get to know your own normal irregularities.
- Most lumps are not cancer. Harmless lumps may be swollen mammary glands or nodes formed of normal breast tissue. Let a doctor decide.
- Women who examine their breasts regularly more easily discover even very small changes.
- X-ray of the breasts, mammography, may show cancerous tumours that are too small to feel. But ten percent of all cancerous tumours of the breast do not show on the x-ray, even if they are large. They are nearly always discovered by the woman herself when she examines her breasts.
- Around the age of 50 the mammary glands regress and are replaced by fat. The breasts then became less lumpy and easier to examine.
- The size of the breasts depends on how much fat they contain, not on the number of mammary glands. Cancer occurs equally often in large and in small breasts.
- Blows to the breast do not cause cancer.
- Women with few menstrual cycles in their lives, in other words women who have reached puberty late, had many children, breastfed for a long time and so on, run a slightly lower risk of developing breast cancer. This in turn indicates that hormones have a bearing on the occurrence of breast cancer.

- Where there is a small cancer tumour that has not spread it is in most cases enough to remove a small part of the breast. Do not hesitate to go to the doctor, however small the lump.
- Today about 80 per cent of all women who develop breast cancer can be cured. The smaller the tumour, the greater the chance of being cured. Research has made progress and there has been a lot of improvement in methods of treatment.

Breast cancer gives various symptoms

Lump in the breast



A lump in the breast is the most common symptom. Most lumps are quite harmless. But only a doctor can decide this. So do not hesitate in contacting a doctor if you feel a change.

Lump in the armpit



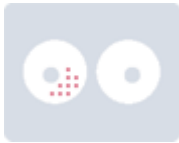
Breast cancer can spread to lymph glands in the armpit. They can be felt and sometimes even be seen as one or more lumps. But enlarged lymph glands may have causes other than cancer.

General enlargement, greater firmness



Some forms of cancer make the whole breast larger and feel harder.

Reddening and “orange peel skin”



One fairly unusual symptom is swelling causing the normal pores in the skin to be more clearly visible and reminiscent of orange peel.

Dimples



Breast cancer may grow in such a way as to make it appear that the tumour is pulling the skin or the nipple inwards. A little hollow forms in the skin.

Blood or fluid



Blood or fluid from the nipple may be a symptom of cancer.

Some hints

- Turn first to the breast clinic at the nearest hospital or to your health centre or gynaecologist if you suspect anything that may be a symptom of cancer. The address and phone number may be found in the telephone directory under the heading “Health and Medical Services” [Hälsa- och sjukvård], in the blue pages. Or of course you can also contact a private doctor.
- Go for mammography when you are called – even if you feel perfectly well.

- Many women find it hard to examine their breasts at first. But don't give up, it gets easier with practice.
- Begin by getting to know your breasts. Don't search for anything strange, just learn how they normally feel. That will make it easier to feel if there is anything that is unusual.
- Mark it off on the calendar whenever you examine the breast.

Get answers to your questions

Phone 020-222 111 or write to infostodlinjen@cancerfonden.se and obtain answers to your questions about cancer. The Swedish Cancer Society information and support line is staffed by qualified nursing staff with long experience of cancer care. You can turn to us for answers, emotional support or more written information. Calls are free.