

REEMORA MEDICAL INSIGHTS

Breast cancer: Awareness goes beyond October

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, but breast health deserves our attention throughout the year.

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Published 3 October 2026

Breast health throughout the year

Every October, the pink ribbon reminds us of a disease that affects many families: breast cancer.

That awareness matters. What matters even more is carrying it through the year: paying attention to our bodies, taking changes seriously and attending recommended screening appointments regularly.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women. The risk increases with age in particular. Family history, certain genetic changes, dense breast tissue and other factors can also affect individual risk. At the same time, breast cancer can occur in women with no apparent risk factors.

Early detection is more than self-examination

An important part of early breast cancer detection in Austria is its quality-assured mammography screening programme. Women aged 45 to 74 can take part in a free screening mammogram every two years and receive an automatic reminder. Women aged 40 to 44 and those aged 75 and over can also register voluntarily for the programme.

Know what is normal for you

Mammography can detect changes that cannot yet be felt. Checking your own breasts therefore does not replace mammography. The aim is breast awareness: every woman should know how her breasts normally look and feel. New changes should be assessed by a doctor.

Examples include a new lump, a newly inverted nipple, skin changes, redness or swelling, an unusual change in breast shape, or bloody or otherwise unusual nipple discharge. New changes in the armpit should also be examined.

Mammography and ultrasound are not the same

A common misconception is that breast ultrasound can generally replace mammography. This is not the case. The two methods serve different purposes.

With dense breast tissue or an abnormal finding, an additional ultrasound may be useful. Ultrasound is therefore an important complement, but not a general substitute for quality-assured screening mammography.

What can we do ourselves?

Not every case of breast cancer can be prevented. Personal risk can, however, be influenced to some extent. Regular physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet, not smoking and drinking little or no alcohol are among the measures that can contribute to cancer prevention in general.

For breast cancer prevention, abstaining from alcohol is the safest choice.

Talk about family history

Personal family history is particularly important. If, for example, a mother, sister or other close relative has had breast or ovarian cancer, individual risk should be discussed with a doctor. When hereditary risk is higher, different screening strategies tailored to that risk apply.

Nutrition as part of breast health

From a nutritional medicine perspective, there are also ways to support our health. There is no single “cancer diet” and no food that can prevent breast cancer. A balanced, predominantly plant-based diet with plenty of vegetables, fruit, whole grains and legumes can contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Highly processed foods, sugary drinks and large amounts of red and processed meat should be limited where possible.

My appeal for October — and every other month

Take your breast health seriously in October and every other month.

Seek reliable information. Know your individual risk. Attend recommended early detection examinations. If you notice a new or unusual change, do not wait months to have it assessed by a doctor.

The pink ribbon may remind us in October, but our health deserves our attention every day of the year.

This article is for general health information only and does not replace individual medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. If you have health concerns or notice new changes, please consult a doctor.

Sources

frueh-erkennen.at · gesundheit.gv.at

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