

More Breast Cancer Myths Dispelled

Find out the truth about this disease

What you think you know about breast cancer and the truth might be two different things. “Women often hear about the worst case scenarios and think that applies to them,” says radiation oncologist Jeanette Blauth, M.D. Recently, a team of Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network physicians dispelled popular breast cancer myths so you’re armed with the truth. Here’s what they want you to know.



Myth: My mammogram was normal, I don’t have to worry.

“Mammograms detect 80-90 percent of breast cancers,” says breast imaging specialist Susan Trevisan, M.D. That’s why it’s important to have a yearly breast examination with your physician and continue monthly breast self-exams to detect any changes between screenings.

Myth: The lump in my breast hurts. It’s not cancer. “Though it’s rare for breast cancer to present as pain, it’s still possible,” Trevisan says. Your best bet? Talk to your doctor about any changes with your breasts—including pain.

Myth: If I have a breast biopsy and there’s cancer, the surgeon might remove my entire breast without talking to me. “Absolutely not,” says surgical oncologist Heiwon Chung, M.D. “All options are discussed with the patient before surgery.” With today’s advances in early detection and treatment, about two-thirds of breast cancers can be treated with lumpectomy (removal of just the tumor) followed by radiation therapy to ensure that no cancer cells remain.

Myth: Chemotherapy makes you vomit. While some patients may feel nauseous from chemotherapy, this symptom can usually be controlled with relatively new anti-nausea medications. “There also have been significant advances in chemotherapy medications that cause fewer side effects,” says medical oncologist Savitri Padmanabhan, M.D.

Myth: Coffee, antiperspirants and foods microwaved in plastic can cause breast cancer. “There’s just no direct evidence to prove these claims,” Chung says. “There is evidence linking obesity to breast cancer, so weight control and physical fitness play an important role in prevention.”



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