



Cause Kit

Under the Same Pink Sky by Gladys Ng

What do you need to know?

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Singapore,¹ particularly for those above 40. Every year, over 1,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer, and over 400 die from the disease.² These figures are expected to rise amidst an ageing population in Singapore. In 2018 alone, breast cancer claimed the lives of 991 women.³

It is predicted that 1 in 14 women will develop breast cancer by the age of 75.⁴ According to experts, risk factors include being aged 40 and above, having a family history of breast cancer, early onset of menstruation and late menopause, as well as having no children or having a first child above the age of 30.⁵

Early detection is key to battling breast cancer, and early treatment can result in survival rates of over 90 percent. However, many people avoid getting screened due to misconceptions and fears about mammograms and breast cancer.⁶ Some misconceive mammogram screening as being harmful to the body due to excess radiation than it is in actuality where radiation exposure is at very low levels and that the screening is a prevention tool of breast cancer as opposed to it being an early detection tool of curable breast cancer to increase survival. Breast cancer is also commonly feared to be contagious and with the thought of losing one's breasts or losing the arm of the affected side upon surgery.⁷

However, recent medical advancements could spare the need for surgery and the removal of the breast, including cryoablation, a minimally-invasive procedure that uses extreme temperatures between -40°C and -170°C to destroy diseased cells.

Why should you care?

The chances of developing breast cancer increase with age. Yet only 2 in 5 women go for regular mammogram screenings, which remains the most reliable and effective

¹ HealthHub (2019) [Breast Cancer](#)

² Singapore Cancer Society (2019) [Mammogram](#)

³ Choo (2019). The Straits Times '[More women going for first breast cancer screening, but few go for second mammogram](#)'

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Changi General Hospital (2015) [25 Breast Cancer Myths](#)

screening tool for breast cancer.⁸ Furthermore, only 45% of Singaporean performed both breast self-examinations and medical checks.⁹

While the number of women who had their first mammogram screening rose by 30% between 2014 and 2016, less than 20% of them went for a second mammogram. This is a cause for concern because there is no guarantee that you will remain cancer-free for the rest of your life. Regular breast screenings once every 2 years are highly encouraged, especially for women aged 50 and above.¹⁰

Finally, when a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer, the rest of her family and social circle – her kids, spouse, parents, employers, colleagues, and friends - are also affected.⁷ This includes family caregivers of cancer patients who may experience emotional distress and deteriorated quality of life whilst needing to balance both home and work spheres to care for their affected loved ones.¹¹

Where is help available?

BreastScreen Singapore (BSS) is the national breast cancer screening programme under the Health Promotion Board (HPB) which can be accessed at 18 different polyclinics island-wide at a subsidised rate.

Also, Singapore Cancer Society (SCS), Breast Cancer Foundation (BCF), and National Healthcare Group Diagnostics (NHGD) have launched the first mobile screening centre through the 'Community Mammobus Programme' to make mammogram screenings more accessible and affordable. The service is free for Singaporean citizens doing their first breast screening! Support groups are also available for patients and their family through health care providers and community organisations such as the National Cancer Centre Singapore, SCS's Reach to Recovery programme, National University Cancer Institute Singapore and BCF.

How can you help?

Support Breast Cancer Foundation (BCF)'s work to eradicate breast cancer as a life-threatening disease. You can also volunteer to journey with the survivors and their families.

Be a Donor

Donate to support BCF's work. Your donation is tax-deductible. Even better, with the Bicentennial Fund, your donation is now matched dollar for dollar (subject to terms and conditions).

Donate to BCF on giving.sg.

⁸ Singapore Cancer Society (2019) [Breast Cancer Campaign](#)

⁹ Breast Cancer Foundation (2019) Awareness Infographic

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Lim et al., (2017) [Quality of life of family caregivers of cancer patients in Singapore and globally](#)

Be a Volunteer

BCF has a Befriending Volunteering Programme and Hospital Visits Programme for volunteers to counsel and journey with women at various stages of breast cancer, from the initial check up to post-operative stages. Sometimes, having someone to lend a listening ear or provide emotional support could make all the difference.

Men are not left out in this fight: Join BCF's Men Support League.

If you know any women who need support, contact the BCF helpline: 6356 0123.

Volunteer with BCF through giving.sg.

Be an Advocate

Spread the word that self-examination is crucial for early detection of breast cancer. Start the conversation by hosting film screenings with your friends, colleagues, and families.

Be a 15 Shorts ambassador take action at www.15shorts.com.