



Breast Cancer Awareness Month!

October is [Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#), a time to focus on education, early detection, support, and wellness. Breast cancer affects many lives, both personally and in families. Our goal this month is to provide credible information, helpful resources, and actionable health tips to support you and your loved ones.

What You Should Know ...

- **Prevalence & Importance of [Early Detection](#):** Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers among women in the U.S., after skin cancer. But when found early (for example via mammograms), treatment tends to be more effective, and outcomes are better.
- **[Risk Factors](#):** Some risk factors are not in your control (age, family history, certain genetic mutations like BRCA1/2), but many others are associated with lifestyle.



Health Tips & Risk-Reduction Strategies ...

Tip	What to Do	Why it Helps
Maintain a healthy weight	Aim for a body mass index (BMI) in a healthy range, avoid excessive weight gain especially after menopause.	Excessive body fat after menopause increases estrogen levels, which can increase risk.
Be physically active	Try for at least 150 minutes/week of moderate activity (walking, cycling, etc.), or 75 minutes/vigorous activity, plus strength training.	Physical activity helps with weight control, hormone regulation, reduces risk even among higher-risk individuals.
Eat a balanced diet	Emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats. Limit processed foods, high-sugar items, and moderate amounts of red meat.	Diets rich in plant foods, fiber, less processed foods correlate with lower risk.
Limit alcohol	If you drink, keep it to one drink per day or less; or consider avoiding alcohol.	Alcohol consumption is linked with increased risk.

Screenings & Self-Awareness ...

- **Know what is “normal” for you:** know how your breasts look and feel. Any changes (lumps, shape changes, nipple discharge, dimpling, swelling) should prompt consultation with a healthcare provider.
- **Mammograms & clinical exams:** [guidelines](#) vary by age and risk level. Talk to your provider to determine what schedule is right.
- **Self-awareness over self-exams:** rather than fixed monthly self-exams for everyone, staying alert to changes is most important. If you notice something unusual, don't wait.

For more information and resources on breast cancer, visit your Be Well Vermont Wellness Platform:

www.bluecrossvt.org/bewellvt



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