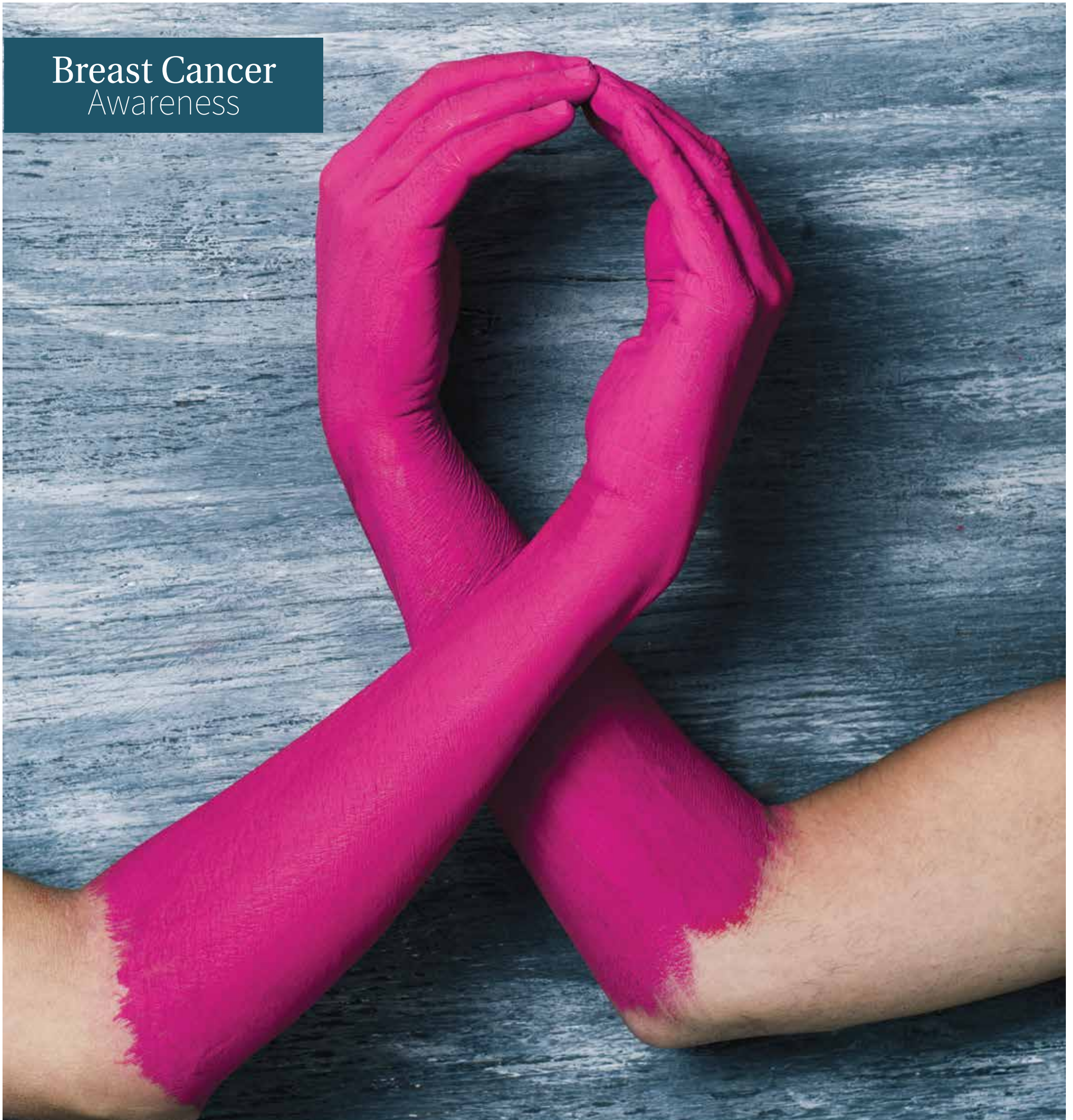


Breast Cancer  
Awareness



# Breast Cancer Awareness History



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Since 1985, October has been recognized as Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

It was initially a collaboration of The American of Family Physicians, AstraZeneca Healthcare Foundation, Cancer Care Inc. and other sponsors.

In more recent years, corporations and sports leagues have banded together to boost awareness during the month. All of which has been a boon to fundraising efforts in bettering treatment with a goal of one day eradicating the scourge.

## WHAT IS THE GOAL?

The early goal of Breast Cancer

Awareness Month was to educate women about breast cancer and early detection tests, according to Brevard Health Alliance. One in eight women will be diagnosed in their lifetime. One of chief objectives was to promote mammograms as an important tool to be used in the fight against breast cancer.

During the month of October, breast cancer survivors and those with breast cancer are celebrated and encouraged to share their stories. The month is also dedicated to raising funds for breast cancer research and other related causes.

Since 1985, billions of dollars have been raised for the cause. Since 1990, death rates from breast cancer have been declining, in part because of

better screening and early detection, and improved treatment options.

## THE SYMBOLIC PINK RIBBON

The first nationwide campaign that utilized the pink ribbon was in 1992 by Estée Lauder cosmetics. They handed out 1.5 million pink ribbons, making them recognizable as the premier visual reminder of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

The NFL has become one of the largest supporters of breast cancer awareness month, with nearly all players, coaches and referees donning the pink ribbon each October to show their support.

In 2021, the NFL and American Cancer Society will be teaming up for a 13th consecutive season to support

the cause through the league's Crucial Catch: Intercept Cancer. The initiative also promotes early detection and mammogram screenings and risk reduction efforts.

Since 2012, the NFL has funded the American Cancer Society's Community Health Advocates Implementation Nationwide Grants for Empowerment and Equity (CHANGE) grants, which have contributed to 370,000 screenings in underserved communities and reached more than 1 million individuals with education, screening reminders and patient navigation. This, in turn, brings these life-saving messages and screening services to those who need them most, according to the league.

# Reduce Breast Cancer Risks

Women with certain risk factors are more likely than others to develop breast cancer, according to the National Breast Cancer organization.

Some women have an increased risk based on family heritage. There are other risk factors that can be controlled, according to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

## GET TO KNOW THE RISK FACTORS

Except for skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer in women in the U.S. It can be treated successfully.

A few risks of getting breast cancer include:

**Being a woman.** Simply being a woman, is the biggest risk factor for developing breast cancer.

**Age.** Just like many other diseases, the risk of one getting it increases as one gets older.

**Family history.** If you've had one first-degree female relative (sister, mother, daughter) diagnosed with breast cancer, your risk is doubled. Understanding your history is key to beating breast cancer.

## PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Lifestyle habits that can help reduce your risk of breast cancer include:



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**Maintain a healthy weight.** According to the National Cancer Institute, being overweight or obese after menopause increases a woman's risk of breast cancer and can worsen outcomes after a diagnosis. Putting on a lot of extra pounds in the early stages of adulthood can nearly double your chance of developing breast cancer after meno-

pause. But if you're able to avoid gaining weight, your risk is cut in half.

**Eat less red meat.** High consumption of red meat is related to a greater risk of developing breast and other cancers. Aim to consume more plant-based sources of protein, such as beans, nuts, and quinoa.

**Eat more fruit and vegeta-**

**bles.** Lower intake of fruits and vegetables is associated with breast cancer, particularly estrogen receptor (ER)-negative breast cancer. The USDA dietary guidelines recommend consuming two cups of fruit and two-and-a-half cups of vegetables each day.

**Limit alcohol.** Even moderate alcohol consumption is

associated with a higher risk of breast cancer. Women who have between two and three alcoholic drinks per day have a 20% higher risk of the disease compared to those who do not drink.

**Quit smoking.** Several studies have demonstrated a link between smoking and an increased risk of developing breast cancer.

# Support Groups and Healing

Cancer support groups are meetings for people with cancer and anyone touched by the disease, including family members.

The benefits can be many. The top reason people join support groups, even those who have a good family support infrastructure, is to be with others who have had similar cancer experiences. Research shows that joining a support group improves both quality of life and survival, according to the National Cancer Institute.

## TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS

Some groups focus on all kinds of cancer, while others are focused on one kind, such as a group for women with breast cancer, according to NCI. Some can be open to everyone or just for people of a certain age, sex, culture or religion.

Children and family members of patients also can benefit from support groups that focus on family concerns, relationship changes, financial worries and how to support the person with cancer. Some groups include both survivors and family members.

Online support groups take place through chat rooms, webinars, social media or moderated discussion groups.



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Online groups offer flexibility to participants and are a resource for people who live in rural areas where an in-person group might not be available.

Some support groups are conducted by conference call, bringing together people from all over the country who have

been touched by cancer.

Here are some benefits of support groups, according to the NCI. They can:

- Help you feel better, more hopeful, and not so alone.
- Give you a chance to talk about your feelings and work through them.

- Help you deal with practical problems, such as problems at work or school.

- Help you cope with side effects of treatment.

## WHERE TO FIND A SUPPORT GROUP

The NCI recommends

reaching out to the following sources in your community and online for support groups:

- Your local hospital.
- Your social worker.
- Other patients who have tried support groups.
- An online search for groups.

# Personalized Survivorship Care

People are living longer after being diagnosed with breast cancer and need personalized survivorship care plans to meet their differing needs, according to a Dutch study, presented in May 2021.

## WHAT ARE SURVIVORSHIP CARE PLANS?

Medical professionals and scientists estimate that there are about 3.8 million breast cancer survivors in the U.S. with the number expected to increase substantially, according to BreastCancer.org.

Yet, because of treatments, many breast cancer survivors are at a higher risk of developing other diseases as they age, including high blood pressure, heart disease and osteoporosis.

Survivorship care plans are written documents made up of two parts. One is a record of treatments the patient has received. The second part is a roadmap of what you can expect in the years after treatment, including any late or long-term side-effects and a schedule of how you'll be monitored for these side-effects and other health conditions, according to BreastCancer.org.

To make it easier for you and your doctors to develop a sur-



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vivorship care plan, professional organizations such as the American Society of Clinical Oncology have developed templates you can use as a starting point.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PATIENTS

Ask your oncologist about a

survivorship care plan.

Here are some questions you may want to ask your oncologist, according to BreastCancer.org:

- Ask for a survivorship care plan in writing that explains all the medical issues you need to consider and lists which screening tests you

need and when you should have them.

- Ask which doctor you should see for each medical issue.

- If your oncologist recommends that you see a specialist — a cardiologist for example — and you've never seen one before, you may want to

ask for a referral to a specific doctor.

- If there is anything in your survivorship care plan that you don't understand, ask your doctor or nurse to explain it.

It's also important to coordinate the plan with your primary care doctor.

# Exercise and Mindfulness Training

A combination of exercise and mindfulness training appear to better alleviate fatigue in breast cancer survivors than either technique alone, according to new research.

## FATIGUE AND BREAST CANCER TREATMENT

As many of 90% of breast cancer patients must deal with fatigue, as it is the most common side-effect of treatment, according to BreastCancer.org. Some doctors estimate that nine out of 10 people have some fatigue during treatment. Even rest can be ineffective in curbing fatigue, and it can last for months after treatment.

## ABOUT THE STUDY

Few studies have examined the combination of exercise and mindfulness or relaxation training to ease fatigue. A new study published by the journal *Psycho-Oncology* divided women into three groups: aerobic exercise-only, relaxation-only and a combination group.

“Over the course of the week, the groups that took part in a combination of exercise and mindfulness training reported a drop in fatigue levels from moderate to mild. The other groups did not show a



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comparable degree of improvement,” said Jason Cohen, a former graduate student in the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Exercise, Technology, and Cognition Laboratory, in a statement.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PATIENTS

If you’re having fatigue from breast cancer treatment, ask your doctor about combining exercise and mindfulness training. Research shows that exercise can reduce the risk of

breast cancer recurrence. Ask your doctor how much and how often you can exercise, as well as if there are types of exercise you should avoid, suggests BreastCancer.org.

Check for group exercise classes for cancer patients in

your area. Exercising with others can help keep you motivated. Your medical team should be able to refer you to available mindfulness training in your area, or you can look for online videos or courses to get started.

# Fertility Drugs Do Not Increase Risk

Fertility treatments to release eggs do not increase the risk of developing breast cancer, new research conducted at King's College London has shown.

## THE RESEARCH

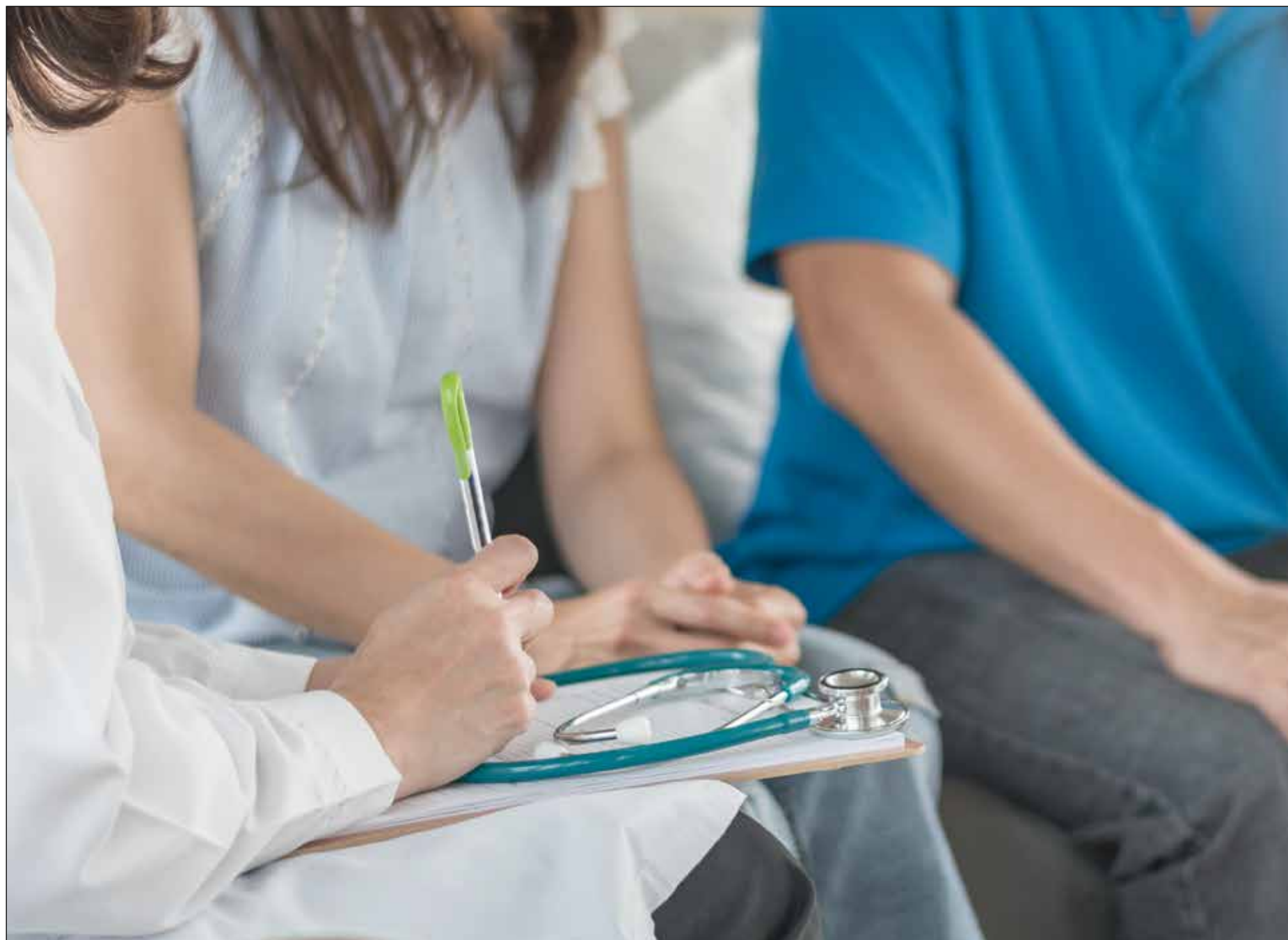
Researchers from King's College London and King's Fertility analyzed studies involving 1.8 million women undergoing fertility treatments. The women were followed up in studies for an average period of 27 years and had no increase in the risk of developing breast cancer.

The research was published in June *Fertility and Sterility* and is the largest study to date assessing whether commonly used fertility drugs are for a cancer risk for women, according to *Science Daily*.

Fertility treatments can range from using medications to boost the release of an egg in a woman's natural cycle to more complex treatment such as IVF, which involves stimulating a patient's ovarian cycle, extracting eggs from their ovaries, fertilizing them with sperm in a laboratory, then transferring the embryo into the womb to develop, according to *Science Daily*.

## 'EVIDENCE NEEDED TO REASSURE WOMEN'

Fertility drugs to stimulate ovaries to release eggs have



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been used to treat infertility since the early 1960s. Drugs that are used to stimulate the ovaries increase estrogen hormone production and can act on breast cells. There has been concern that this could transform cells into a malignancy.

The review examined studies from 1990 to January 2020. Women of all reproductive

ages were included in this study and followed up for an average of 27 years after their fertility treatment. Researchers found no significant increase in risk to women exposed to treatment versus untreated women, and untreated women who were infertile.

"Fertility treatment can be an emotional experience,"

said study author Dr Yusuf Beebeejaun from King's College London and King's Fertility. "Patients often ask us if taking ovarian stimulating drugs will put them at increased risk of developing cancers, including breast cancer. To answer that important clinical question, we undertook this review that reports data from nearly

two million people."

Dr. Sesh Sunkara, senior author of the paper, said in a news release, "Our study showed that the use of drugs to stimulate ovaries in fertility treatment did not put women at increased risk of breast cancer. This study provides the evidence needed to reassure women and couples seeking fertility treatments."

# Spread Awareness

If you have been personally affected by breast cancer or have a friend or family member who has been affected, you may be looking for ways to help spread awareness and support breast cancer patients.

Here are some ideas from the National Breast Cancer Foundation and the National Foundation for Cancer Research.

1. Share your story of how breast cancer has impacted you on the National Breast Cancer Foundation's website. During the month of October, the organization will share stories on their website as a "celebration of strength and a message of support to those currently on their own breast cancer journey." Visit <https://bit.ly/3IT2HVH> to share.

2. Make a one-time or monthly donation to help a woman in need get screening or access to treatment. Visit <https://bit.ly/3AyJenL> to donate.

3. Spread the word on your social media channels. Link to your favorite breast cancer research or aid organization. You could also consider hosting a virtual fundraiser or a Facebook fundraiser.

4. Proudly wear a pink rib-



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bon during October or year-round. It creates a conversation starter to help you share your story.

5. Alternatively to wearing a pink ribbon, participate in Breast Cancer Now's Wear it

Pink Day. On October 22, 2021, wear a pink outfit and coordinate with friends to help spread awareness. You can also host a fundraiser on the day.

5. Breast cancer patients may not always ask for help

when they need it. Go out of your way to offer help proactively. Say something like, "Could I come over and walk the dog every afternoon next week?" or "Can I bring dinner for the family on your upcoming

ing treatment days?"

6. Many chemo wards take donations of clothing, scarves and hats for patients. Reach out to local organizations to see what good or services they could use.