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## The Ways of Raising Awareness about Breast Cancer

Breast cancer awareness is an effort to raise awareness and reduce the stigma of breast cancer through education on symptoms and treatment. Supporters hope that greater knowledge will lead to earlier detection of breast cancer, which is associated with higher long-term survival rates, and that money raised for breast cancer will produce a reliable, permanent cure.

Breast cancer advocacy and awareness efforts are a type of health advocacy. Breast cancer advocates raise funds and lobby for better care, more knowledge, and more patient empowerment. They may conduct educational campaigns or provide free or low-cost services. Breast cancer culture, sometimes called pink ribbon culture, is the cultural outgrowth of breast cancer advocacy, the social movement that supports it, and the larger women's health movement.

The pink ribbon is the most prominent symbol of breast cancer awareness, and in many countries the month of October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Some national breast cancer organizations receive substantial financial support from corporate sponsorships. Support groups can be an important resource for people diagnosed with breast cancer. They help increase the support network of the people in the group.

Support groups vary in their focus. Some groups mainly provide information and education (for example, what to expect with chemotherapy and tips on how to cope with treatment). Other groups focus on emotional support. These groups encourage people to share their feelings.

Both types of support groups play a role in the recovery process after diagnosis and treatment. Some support groups are led by professionals. Others are more informal and take place in churches or homes. Some may include complementary therapies (such as meditation) in their sessions. Support groups usually meeting monthly or weekly.

Although support groups can be a powerful force for healing, they aren't for everyone. Those focused on emotional support are useful for people who are comfortable expressing their feelings and fears about breast cancer in a group setting. People reach this stage at different times in their recovery, or not at all.

Some people are more comfortable talking one-on-one with a counselor or therapist. Others prefer to keep their feelings to themselves or to share them only with close family and friends. No support group model is right for everyone.

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Most support groups are tailored to meet the needs of people of a certain age or at a certain stage of dealing with their breast cancer. For example, many hospitals and local health organizations offer support groups for people who have been recently diagnosed. Other groups are designed for those undergoing chemotherapy or those dealing with fear of a breast cancer recurrence.

Online support groups are available through many organizations. Similar to in-person groups, online support groups provide a chance to share information, give and receive social support and gain a sense of empowerment.

Men with breast cancer face unique challenges and needs. In-person support groups for men with breast cancer can be hard to find. Although support groups may improve quality of life for people diagnosed with breast cancer, it's unclear whether they improve long-term survival.

Most studies have found no benefit from support groups on breast cancer survival. However, social support may still be important to survival. Some data suggest women with breast cancer who have more social support from social networks (such as from friends and family) have better survival.

You don't have to face breast cancer alone. Having the support of others is an important part of breast cancer survivorship. Research actually shows that taking part in support groups, where you both give and receive help, is an effective way to reduce the stress and anxiety that can come with a breast cancer diagnosis. It's OK to ask for support, and there are many groups out there willing to provide it to you at no cost.

Below are some free resources you can use to connect with a breast cancer support group. They include both online and in-person communities, where you can talk with a group or one-on-one. Some focus on certain life stages, while others help you recover from specific experiences. All of them are designed to get you the help you need so you can move forward with your life. Our own Beyond the Shock online community is a free resource where members can ask any question about breast cancer and get answers from fellow survivors. It's a safe place to share your story, and be encouraged by the stories of others. You can also learn all about breast cancer through informative videos and easy-to-read articles. Visit [beyondtheshock.com](http://beyondtheshock.com) to get started.

The Cancer Support Community offers free support groups in a number of cities around the country. If you don't live near a participating city, CSC also has online support groups led by licensed professionals.

Since cancer is less common among young adults, younger cancer patients can feel even more

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isolated. The mobile app Instapeer seeks to help by creating connections between young adult cancer patients, survivors and caregivers. The free app can be downloaded at [instapeer.org](https://instapeer.org).

The American Cancer Society offers one-on-one support through the Reach To Recovery program. Newly diagnosed breast cancer patients are paired with breast cancer survivor volunteers.

The American Cancer Society also offers the Cancer Survivors Network, which has discussion boards and a chat room where you can talk with other cancer survivors.

GriefShare is a support group for people who have experienced the loss of a loved one. A wide variety of charitable organizations are involved in breast cancer awareness and support. These organizations do everything from providing practical support, to educating the public, to dispensing millions of dollars for research and treatment. Thousands of small breast cancer organizations exist. The largest and most prominent are:

Susan G. Komen for the Cure: Komen is the largest and best funded organization, with highly visible fundraisers.

National Breast Cancer Coalition: This large umbrella organization played key roles in several prominent pieces of American legislation, such as the creation of the United States Department of Defense's Breast Cancer Research Program, genetic non-discrimination laws, and the patients' bill of rights. They are committed to evidence-based medicine.

Breast Cancer Action: Famous for its ""Think Before You Pink"" campaign against pinkwashing, BCA emphasizes the need for research into pollution as a cause of breast cancer.[19] Like the National Women's Health Network, they refuse funding from any group that may have a conflict of interest, such as pharmaceutical companies, medical imaging companies, or pollution-causing industries.

National Breast Cancer Organization: Closed in 2004. A dissenter to the notion of mandatory public unity, it provided case management and other services.

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