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Vista Community Clinic

Breast Cancer and Breast Health

An Educational Program for Lesbians

July, 2010

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The Avon Foundation Breast Care Fund
Susan G. Komen for the Cure San Diego Affiliate

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Cancer Risk Among Lesbian

- Breast Cancer is the most common malignancy and the second most common cause of cancer death among women in the U.S.
- Guidelines for breast and cervical screening apply to all women, regardless of sexual orientation.

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What is Breast Cancer?

- A disease that causes cells in the body to change and grow out of control.
- The cancer is named after the part of the body where the lump first starts.
- Breast cancer can develop in lobules and in ducts.

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Breast Cancer Definitions

- **In Situ:** cancer that occurs only in the ducts, lobules, or on the skin of the nipple
- **Localized tumors:** very early cancer that is invasive but limited to the breast.

These terms describe the cancer *stage* at diagnosis

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Breast Cancer Definitions

- **Regional Metastasis:** cancer that has spread to local lymph nodes
- **Distant Metastasis:** cancer that has spread beyond the breast tissue to distant lymph nodes and to other organs

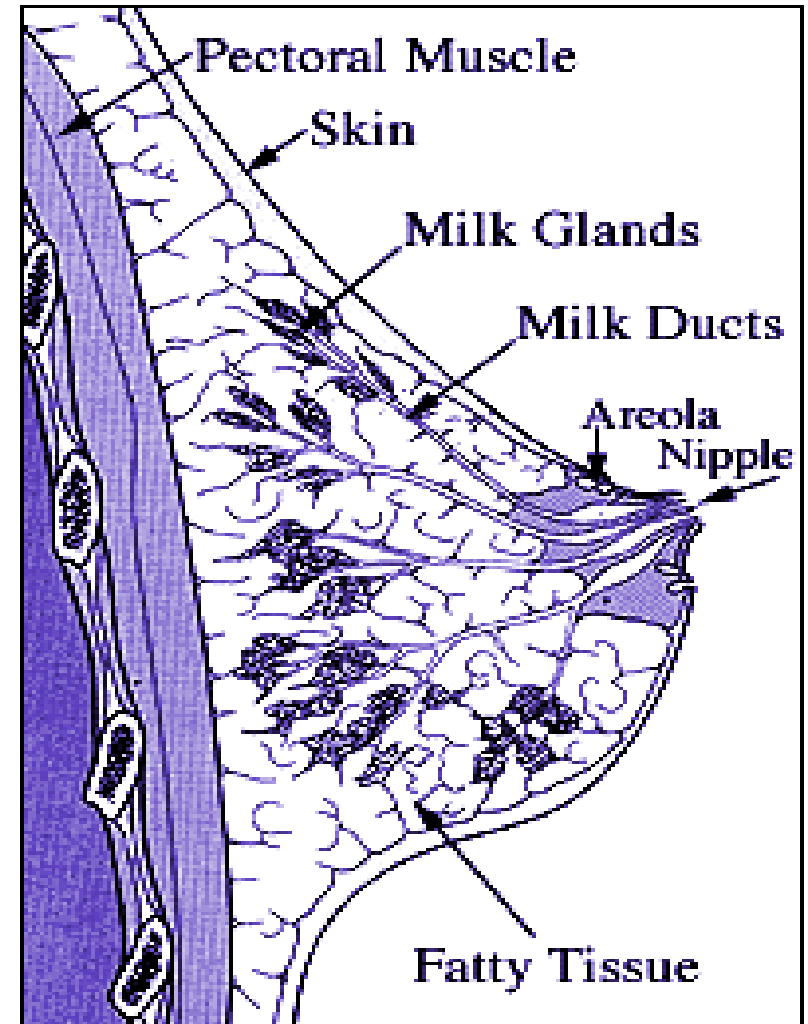
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Breast Anatomy

- Duct – a channel that drains to the nipple
- Lobule – a milk producing sac (milk gland)
- Fatty tissue
- Connective tissue
- Areola – the darker skin surrounding the nipple
- Nipple – the opening of the milk ducts



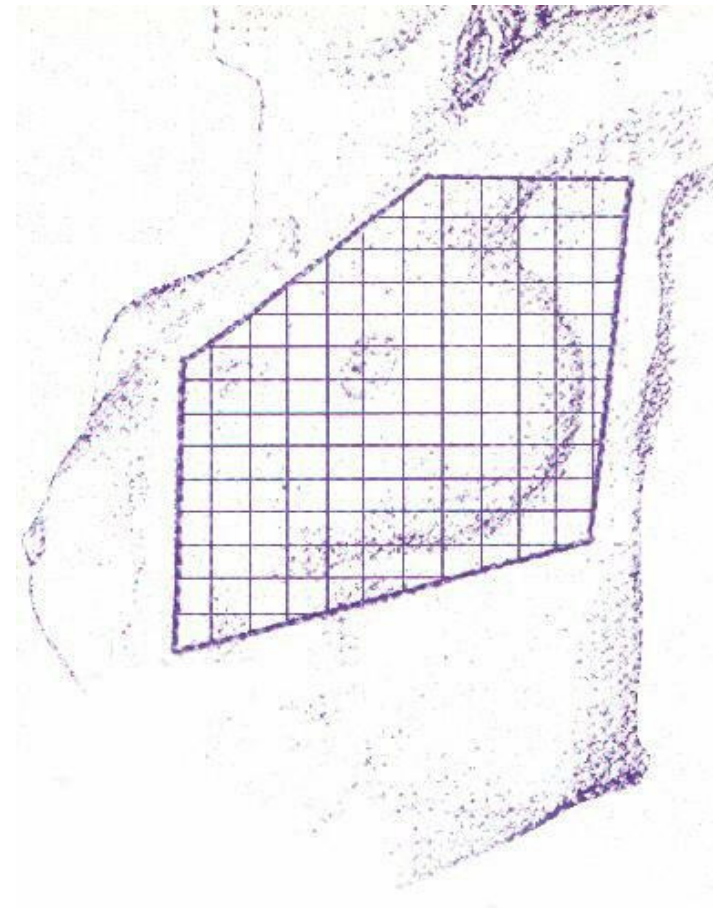
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Breast Anatomy

- Your breasts cover more of your body than you may think.
- Breast tissue extends into the under arm and up to the collarbone, breastbone, and bra line.



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Why Target Lesbian Women?

- Health surveys of lesbian women show that lesbians are less likely than heterosexual women to undergo routine and preventive screenings.
- In the past lesbians have had less access to insurance coverage than heterosexual women who are covered by a spouse versus a partner.
- Lesbians are not comfortable using health care systems due to past history of homophobic reactions from providers and staff.

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Cancer Risk Among Lesbian Women

According to the Women's Health Initiative, data revealed that there is a higher age-adjusted prevalence of breast cancer among lesbian and bisexuals

- 5.8% among life time lesbian
- 7.0% among adult lesbians (partner after age 45)
- 8.4% bisexual women
- 4.9% among heterosexual women.

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Cancer Risk Among Lesbian Women

May have greater risk due to:

- Never having children
- Not seeing a doctor on a regular basis, leading to fewer chances for screenings
- May avoid seeing doctor because of fear of being treated poorly due to sexual orientation

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Risk Among Transgender Persons

- Transgender persons are also at risk for developing breast cancer
- Having surgery to remove breast tissue does not reduce risk
- Screening recommendations are the same for female-to-male (FTM) transpeople*
- Currently no screening recommendations for male-to-female (MTF) transpeople*

* *Susan G. Komen for the Cure – “Facts for Life” Touching lives across our region*



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Importance of Early Detection

Find breast cancer early!

The earlier cancer is found, the greater chance of survival (90% survive if found & treated early)

- In Situ 5 year survival —97%
- Localized 5 year survival — 97%
- Regional metastasis 5 year survival—78.7%
- Distant metastasis 5 year survival—23.3%

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Screening Recommendations

Beginning at age 20

- Have a clinical breast exam (CBE) every 3 years
- Report any breast changes promptly to your health care provider
- If you are at high risk, discuss options with your health care provider

Beginning at age 40

- Have a CBE every year, followed by a mammogram
- Report any breast changes promptly to your health care provider
- If you are at high risk, discuss options with your health care provider

Recommended by American Cancer Society

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Screening Exams

- Step 1: Self-Breast Exam
- Step 2: Clinical Breast Exam
- Step 3: Mammography

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Mammogram

- A mammogram is a low-dose x-ray that takes a picture of the inside of the breast
- The single most effective method of early detection because it can find cancer several years before anyone can see or feel the lump
- Very good, but not perfect

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The Mammogram



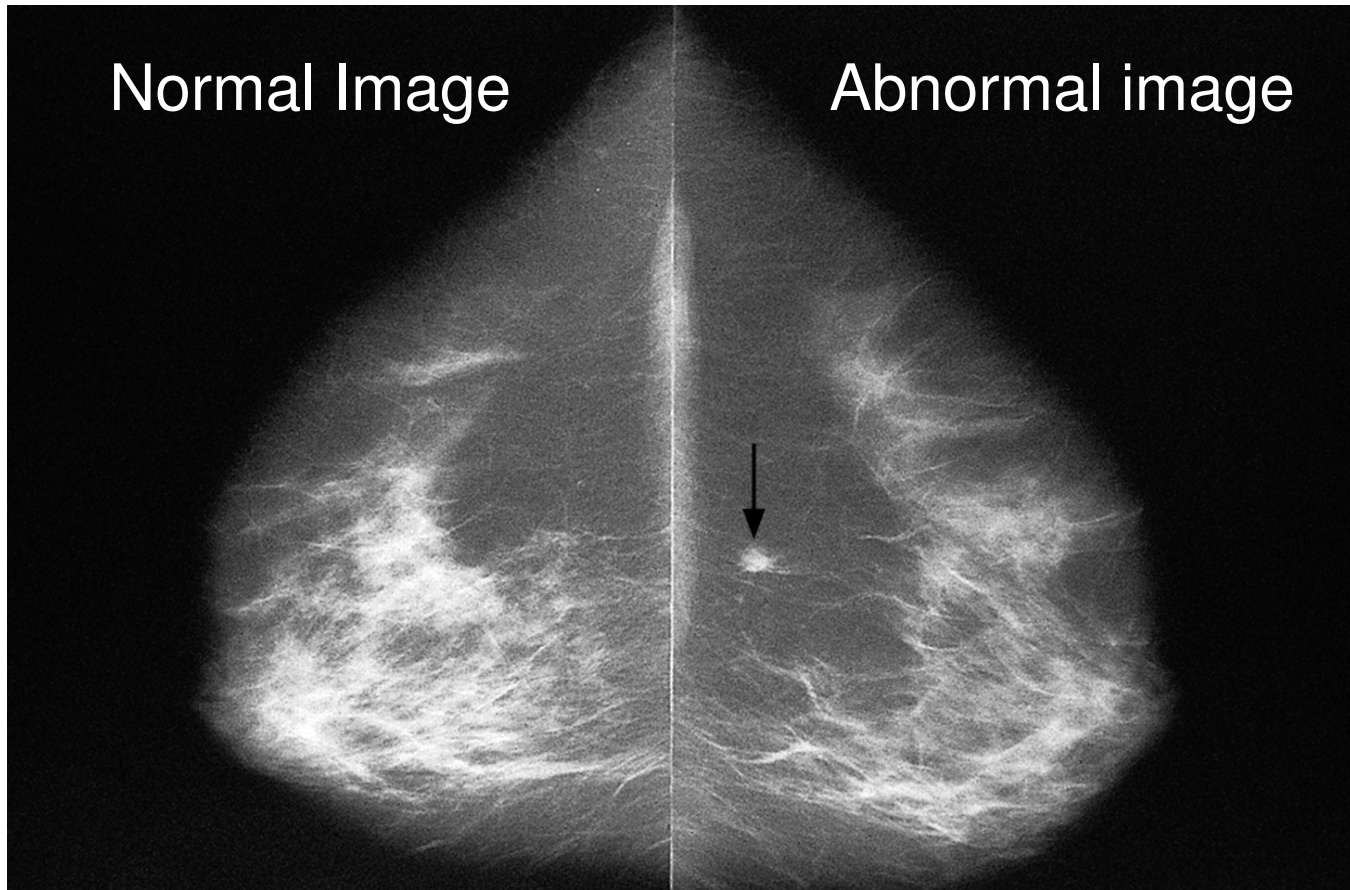
- A technician will gently place your breasts, one at a time, between two plastic plates.
- The plates are flattened for a short time to get a clear picture of the whole breast and surrounding tissue. The pressure is important to get a good picture.
- It may be a little uncomfortable. Some women say it is a little painful.
- An expert physician (radiologist) reads the film and prepares a report

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Mammogram Film



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Conclusion

- Breast Cancer is a concern of many women
- Early detection/treatment leads to the best chance for survival
- Early detection includes BSE, CBE and Mammogram
- If you are 40 years of age or older **NOW** is the time to start your early detection program

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VCC Screening Process

- Breast Cancer and Breast Health Education
- Clinical Breast Exam
- Mammogram Referral

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Find Additional Information

Gay and Lesbian Medical Association

www.glma.org

Lesbian Health and Research Center

www.lesbianhealthinfo.org

Mautner Project, The National Lesbian Health Organization

www.mautnerproject.org

National LGBT Cancer Network

www.cancer-network.org

National Coalition for LGBT Health

www.LGBTHealth.net

Susan G. Komen for the Cure

www.komen.org

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Contact Information

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Breast Health Program

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