

THE PINK MONTH, THE PINK MAN

Breast Cancer Awareness in Men

#OctoberThePinkMonthBreastCancerAwarenessMonth

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Introduction

Everyone, irrespective of gender, is born with some amount of breast tissue. The breast tissue consists of the **milk-producing glands** (called the lobules) and the **ducts** that carry the milk produced to the nipples (see Figure 1). During puberty, females begin to develop more breast tissue than the males. Additionally, the female breast cells are constantly exposed to the growth-promoting effects of the female hormones, oestrogen and progesterone. Apropos, the males eventually do not develop milk producing breasts. This is what likely predisposes females to developing breast cancer than males. However, because males also have some amount of breast tissue, they can also develop breast cancer.

Recently, the Ashanti Regional Directorate of the Ghana Health Service expressed concern with the increasing cases of breast cancer especially among men in the Ashanti region of Ghana. It was indicated that, out of a population of 40 men in the region, up to three men suffer from the disease (Kasapafmonline.com).

This calls for creation of awareness coupled with continuous education on the subject of breast cancer, especially amongst men today.

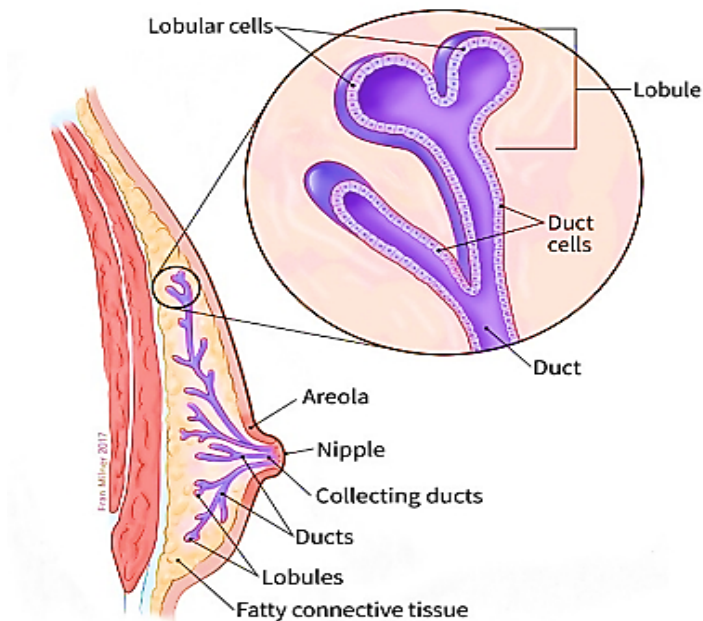


Figure 1: The breast tissue

Source: American Cancer Society, 2020

Causes of male breast cancer

Theoretically, male breast cancer occurs when some cells of the breast begin to divide more rapidly than the normal cell division of the breast. The rapidly dividing cells form a tumour that may spread to nearby tissues such as the lymph nodes or to other parts of the body (see Figure 2).

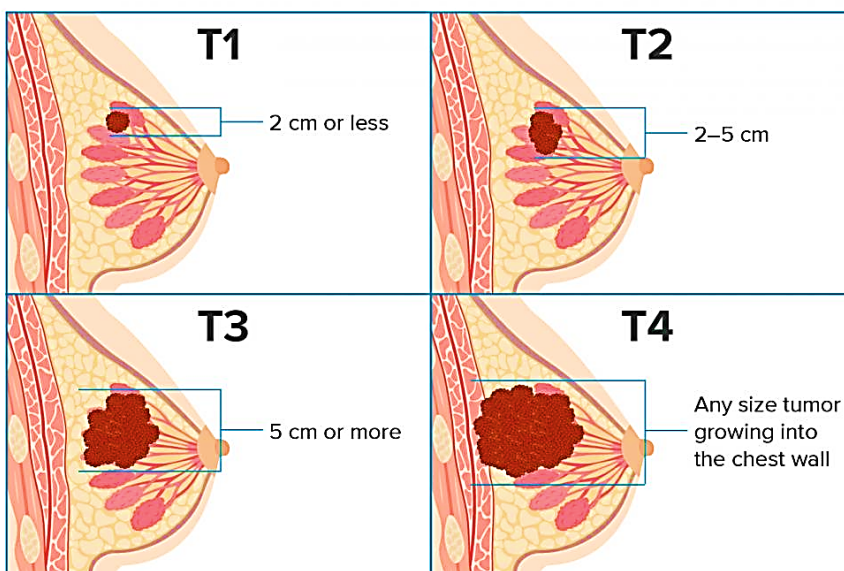


Figure 2: Tumour size chart of breast cancer

Source: Medical News, 2020.

General types of male breast cancer

- Lobular carcinoma (cancer that begins in the milk producing glands)
- Ductal carcinoma (cancer that begins in the milk ducts)

Risk factors of male breast cancer

Factors that increase the risk of male breast cancer include;

- Older age
- Exposure to oestrogen such as taking oestrogen related drugs e.g. drugs used for hormone therapy for prostate cancer
- Family history of breast cancer
- Klinefelter's syndrome (A genetic disorder where males are born with more than one copy of the X chromosome. As a result, such males produce lower levels of certain male hormones and more female hormones)
- Liver disease
- Obesity
- Testicle diseases or surgery

Symptoms and signs of male breast cancer

- A painless lump that does not move around within the breast or thickening in your breast tissue
- Changes to the skin covering your breast, such as dimpling (a slight depression of the skin around the breast), puckering (irregular folding in the skin around the breast), redness around the skin covering your breast
- Changes to your nipple, such as redness around the skin covering your breast, a rash around the nipple, a nipple that begins to turn inward and pain in the nipple area
- Discharge from your nipple which may be stained with blood (see Figure 3).

Breast Changes and Breast Cancer Warning Signs that need Medical Attention!

*Do not ignore these symptoms or delay seeing a medical professional.
A needle biopsy and mammogram can help rule out possible cancer.*

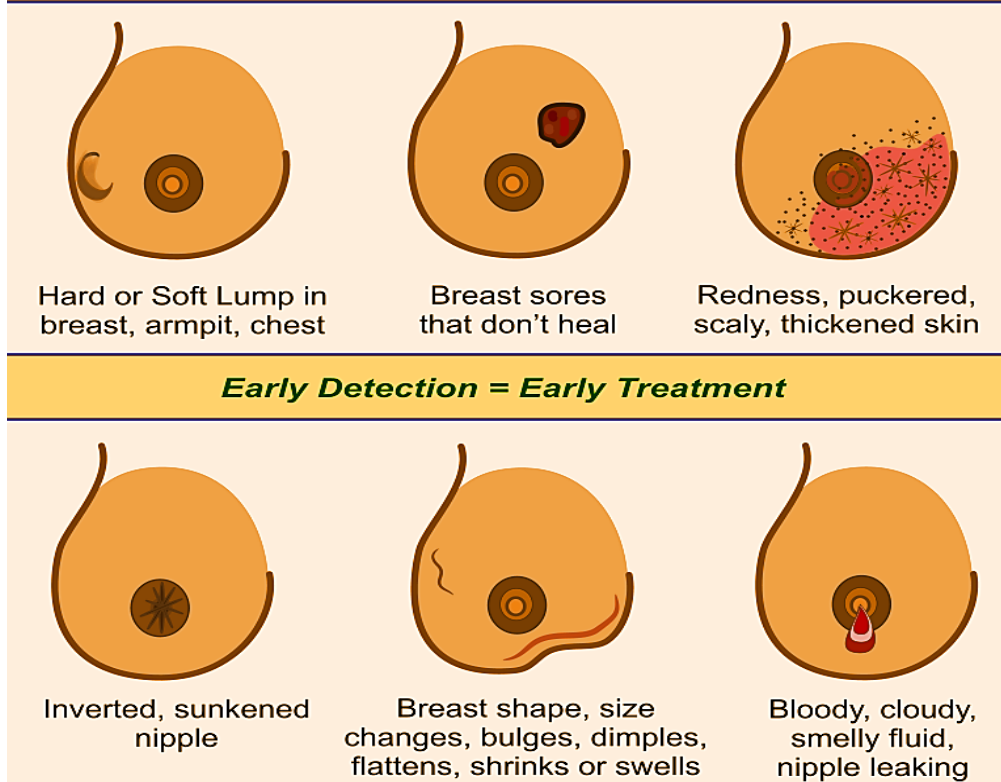


Figure 3: Symptoms and signs of male breast cancer

Source: AABCA, 2020.

Diagnosis of male breast cancer

- Routine physical exams (breast self-examinations)
- Mammography (using X rays)
- Biopsies (examining samples of breast tissue under the microscope)

Treatment of male breast cancer

Generally, male breast cancer detected early have the high probability for treatment success. Treatment options include;

- Surgery to remove the breast tissue
- Chemotherapy
- Radiation therapy

- Hormone therapy
- Targeted therapy

Prevention of male breast cancer

The following measures are recommended as guidelines to help prevent breast cancer in men. They include;

- Avoidance of smoking
- Regular exercise
- Eating a healthy diet, with an emphasis on plant-based foods
- Limiting the consumption of red meats and processed meats
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Limiting or avoidance of alcohol consumption altogether

The month of October is designated by the WHO as the Breast Cancer Awareness month. It is observed to increase attention and support for the awareness, early detection, treatment as well as palliative care for the disease.

We therefore leave you with these thoughts and reminders;

- Breast cancer is not limited to women alone
- Breast cancer in men is real
- Breast cancer in men is avoidable
- Practice regular breast self-examinations and breast cancer screening test.

Let us all stay safe and healthy by adhering to the above preventive measures.

References

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