

MUSLIM AMERICANS REACHING FOR HEALTH AND BUILDING ALLIANCES (MARHABA)



MUSLIM
WOMEN'S
HEALTH &
WELLNESS



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A 53 year old Muslim woman from Bangladesh tells you she has never gotten a mammogram or a Pap smear.

“I don’t need either of those tests. No one in my family ever had any type of cancer so I will not get cancer either. Anyway, it is so hard to make an appointment with the doctor to do any kind of test, especially a test that says I am supposed to take off some of my clothes so the doctor can look at my breasts or my vagina. No! I don’t need that kind of test at all, and my husband says the same thing. I don’t need to get a test like that”



- Do you feel the same way about breast and cervical cancer screening?
- What would you say to this woman if she was your mother or sister? Your friend?
- What would you say to change her mind about screening?

Who is at risk for breast and cervical cancer?

- Cancer rates are increasing among Muslim women who live in the US
 - ▣ The longer you live in the US, the higher your risk of cancer
 - ▣ The risk of cancer also increases as you get older
- Every woman is at risk for breast and cervical cancer
 - ▣ Over 90% of the people with cancer do not have symptoms
 - ▣ Screening helps catch cancer early before it becomes difficult to treat



Breast cancer

- Breast cancer (BC) is the most common cancer in the US and the world
- BC is the second leading cause of cancer death among American women
- In the US, 1 in 8 will develop breast cancer

What are the risk factors for BC?

- Age: 2/3 of cases occur in women over 50 years
- Family history of cancer
- If you've never had children
- Had first child after age 30
- Began menstruation before age 12
- Began menopause after age 55
- Drink alcohol
- Obese or overweight



Not having any of the above risk factors does NOT mean that you are “safe.”

Mammograms

- A mammogram is an X-ray picture of the breasts.
- It can find breast cancer that is too small for you or your doctor to feel. When breast cancer is found early, it is easier to treat.
- It can find cancer up to 2 years before a lump can be felt

If you are...	You should ...
Between 40 and 49 years *	Talk to your doctor about when and how often you should start getting a mammogram
Between 50 – 74 years	Get a mammogram every two years
75 years and over	Talk to your doctor about when and how often you should get a mammogram

**Some immigrant Muslim women may get cancer at younger ages, so please talk to your provider about when and how often you should get a mammogram*

How is a mammogram done?

1. You are given a gown to wear for the test
2. You will stand in front of an X-ray machine
3. The person who is doing the mammogram will gently place your breast between two plastic plates, which will make your breast flat and may feel uncomfortable for a few minutes
4. Results are discussed with your health care provider at a follow-up appointment or via phone call



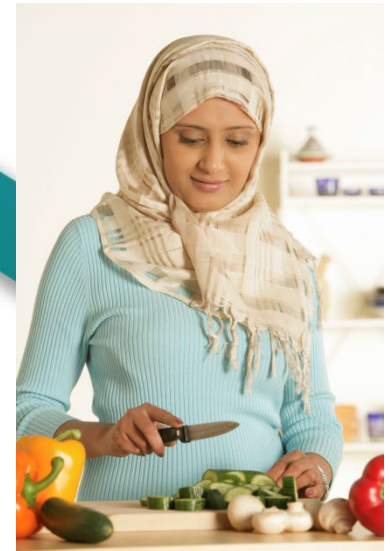
Cervical cancer

- Cervical cancer (CC) is the 4th most commonly diagnosed cancer in the world
- CC is the 4th leading cause of cancer death in the world
- CC is very preventable - 99% curable if discovered very early

What are the risk factors for cervical cancer?

- Human papillomavirus infection Smoking
- Diet low in fruits and vegetables
- Overweight
- Long term use of birth control pills
- 3 or more full term pregnancies
- Younger than 17 years at first full-term pregn
- Family history of cervical cancer

ALL women are at risk for cervical cancer



What is HPV?

- HPV is short for human papillomavirus.
- HPV is a group of more than 150 related viruses. HPV is named for the warts (papillomas) some HPV types can cause.
- Some other HPV types can lead to cancer, especially cervical cancer.
- There are more than 40 HPV types that can infect the genital areas of males and females. But there are vaccines that can prevent infection with the most common types of HPV.

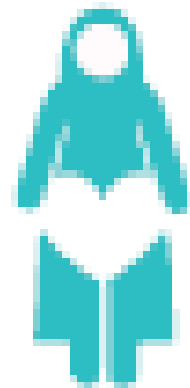
Screening tests for cervical cancer

- A Pap test looks for changes in cells that could become cancer
- A HPV test looks for the virus that can cause these changes in cells

If you are...	You should ...
At least 21 years old	Start to get regular Pap tests every three years
Between the ages of 30 – 65 years	Get a Pap test every three years OR Every 5 years if you combine the Pap test with a test for HPV infection
Older than 65 years	You should talk to your doctor about when and how often you should get a Pap test

How is a Pap test done?

1. You are given a gown to wear for the test.
2. You will lie on an exam table with your feet in stirrups.
3. Your health care provider will gently open your vagina.
4. Samples are taken from your vagina and cervix.
5. Samples are sent to a lab for testing.
6. Results are discussed with your health care provider at a follow-up appointment or via phone call.



Common myths about cancer

- I don't need a cancer screening test if I don't have any symptoms
 - ▣ A screening can find cancers early, before a doctor can see it or feel a lump

- I will die if I get cancer
 - ▣ If cancer is found at very early stages, it can be removed by simple techniques
 - ▣ But it has to be caught early. If it is caught too late and is big, it can cause more damage or require more treatment

Common myths about mammograms

- ❑ Only women with large breasts get breast cancer
 - ▣ There is no relationship between breast size and cancer
- ❑ If I had one normal mammogram, I don't need another one
 - ▣ If you had one mammogram, that's a terrific start. But once is not enough.
 - ▣ If you are between 50-74 years, you should get a mammogram every two years.
 - ▣ If you are between 40-49 years or over 75 years, you should talk to your doctor about how often you should get a mammogram

Common myths about Pap tests

- ❑ A Pap test affects your virginity
 - ❑ A Pap test does not affect your virginity
- ❑ You only need to get a Pap if you are sexually active or are still getting your period
 - ❑ Risk of cancer increases as you get older
- ❑ You do not need to get a Pap if you had a hysterectomy
 - ❑ You should talk to your doctor about getting a Pap even if you had a hysterectomy

What prevents women from getting screening?

- ☐ Cost
- ☐ Inconvenience/ Lack of transportation
- ☐ Not recommended by my doctor
- ☐ No history of cancer in my family
- ☐ Fear of radiation
- ☐ Fear of finding cancer
- ☐ Pain
- ☐ Embarrassment

What helps women get screening?

- Religion
 - ▣ Allah created human beings and gave them their bodies as gifts to be cared for
- Family
 - ▣ In order to take care of your family, you must also take care of yourself
- Friends
- Information & Education



A 63 year old Muslim woman from Nigeria tells you she has never gotten a mammogram or a Pap smear.

“My doctor never told me I was supposed to get those tests so why would I ask him? It is already so hard to understand what he is saying to me, and he does not understand what I am saying to him. As long as I am feeling healthy, I don’t even go to the doctor.”



- Do you feel the same way about breast and cervical cancer screening?
- What would you say to this woman if she was your mother or sister? Your friend?
- What would you say to change her mind about screening?