

## **Men Get It Too!**

Rutland Regional Medical Center started a campaign a few years ago bringing attention to men and breast cancer. “Men Get It Too!” circulated around the community last month as June brings attention to Dads. Dads, Grads, Gramps, Uncles, Brothers and Sons all need to be aware of breast cancer occurring in men. We don’t usually think of men getting breast cancer but one in one thousand diagnoses belong to men.

It was estimated in 2011 that 230,480 cases of invasive breast cancer were diagnosed. Over 2100 of those cases were diagnosed in men and about 400 of them would die from this disease. Compared to the larger number of women who develop breast cancer it is important to recognize that when men are diagnosed it tends to be a later stage than women.

Men are not in the habit of doing self breast exams. Generally it is an accidental finding in the shower or by chance as they walk by a mirror and notice something unusual. Either way, men tend to put off seeing their doctor or the thought of breast cancer barely crosses their mind, if at all. Breast cancer awareness is valuable for men too!

Young women develop full breasts at puberty due to the production of female hormones. In the young male, hormones cause their breast tissue to get even smaller but it never goes away. The female hormone Estrogen, which males have a very small amount of, presents men with a small risk of developing breast cancer. Increasing the risk for breast cancer in men may be obesity, liver disease, heavy alcohol use, and some medical treatments or birth defects that increase estrogen. Having a mutation or change in the gene (BRCA) that helps to block the development of breast cancer may also be a risk factor. When there is a lot of breast cancer (whether men or women) as well as ovarian cancer in families, there may be suspect that there is a “faulty” gene being passed down through the generations.

If you notice any symptoms in your breast, take action. Just as we tell women, if you notice skin dimpling or puckering, nipple retraction (turning inward), redness or scaling of the nipple or breast skin, discharge from the nipple or any kind of lump or swelling make an appointment with your medical provider to evaluate it. As men don’t have much breast tissue, a cancer doesn’t have to get very big before it grows into the chest muscle or out into the skin. This can make the cancer more difficult to treat. Finding something in your breast can be concerning, however, get it checked out sooner than later! Don’t wait, evaluate!

Always assuming that breast cancer happens to a woman takes on an unusual twist when it happens to a man, so keep this in mind. You can find more information about breast cancer in men at the American Cancer Society website: [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) and at the John W. Nick Foundation, Inc.: [www.malebreastcancer.org](http://www.malebreastcancer.org).

This week’s Health Talk article was submitted by the Breast Care Program, Foley Cancer Center at Rutland Regional Medical Center.