

## Breast Cancer Awareness and Lifestyle: A Call to Public Health Action

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Breast cancer is still a deadly foe that affects women globally and claims many lives. Over time, there is increase in prevalence of breast cancer in significance despite advances in therapy and research, therefore, it is necessary to investigate behaviorally modifiable risk variables. Many women have fought breast cancer, whereas some of them lost their lives to it, though many others still suffer from this disease in different parts of the world. The increasing incidence of breast cancer cases, despite the noteworthy advancements in medical science, highlights the pressing necessity of acknowledging and tackling the substantial impact of lifestyle decisions on breast.<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive public health campaign needs to target a decrease in these behaviors for one to be able to untangle the relationship between lifestyle and cancer, which includes exercise, diet, smoking, alcohol intake, and weight management. Such campaigns can significantly lower the incidence of breast cancer by educating the public on risks associated with such habits and providing resources for cessation and healthier alternative and choices.<sup>2</sup>

The cultural beliefs and lack of knowledge are the major factors that influence the occurrence and diagnosis of breast cancer in our part of the world. In one such recent local study carried out in Pakistan, 46.4% of the participants had never had a breast cancer screening, with a major reason being the belief that they are not at risk.<sup>3</sup> Encouragingly, 70.7% of these individuals expressed their intent to commence screening in the future. Another study from the same region highlighted that only 6.7% had heard of breast cancer, with people knew about self examination of breast were 43.1%. Additionally, only 12.4% knew about the examination of breast clinically and 24.1% were aware of mammography, respectively.<sup>4</sup> Lifestyle factors from this study indicated that to stay fit 66.2% of participants were engaged in activities, 2.3% reported smoking, and people with previous diagnosis of breast cancer were 0.8%. These findings underscore the critical need for increased awareness and education about breast cancer and its screening methods in Pakistan.

Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption are significant risk factors for breast cancer, increasing the risk for both active and passive smokers. Evidence strongly supports the link between smoking and breast cancer. Therefore, quitting smoking and

alcohol consumption is highly recommended for women to decrease their risk of breast cancer. Additionally, smoking cessation reduces the likelihood of other cancers.<sup>5</sup> An additional risk factor for breast cancer is obesity, particularly in postmenopausal women. Overweight and breast cancer have a complicated relationship that includes inflammatory processes that promote tumour growth and hormone abnormalities.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, a high-fat diet, alcoholism, and the use of synthetic progestin and oestrogen hormone treatment may raise the risk of breast cancer. There is still conflicting evidence about the relationship between psychological stress and tobacco use and breast cancer.<sup>7</sup> Preventing breast cancer can be greatly impacted by addressing these risk factors. Numerous studies shows that those who eat a diet high in fruits, whole grains, and vegetables and exercise often have a decreased chance of developing breast cancer. Additionally, nursing a child for a year or longer can lower risk of developing breast cancer.

Fighting breast cancer requires a strong public awareness campaign and educational initiatives. Women who are informed about the hazards are more likely to participate in healthcare, which over time can prevent the illness by encouraging early identification and better preventive methods. With the use of social media and instructive seminars, community outreach programmes successfully increase public knowledge of breast cancer risk factors and promote healthier lives through routine screening programmes. In order to promote healthy lifestyle choices, public health programmes should make sure that materials are easily available and useful. This strategy will lower the risk of breast cancer and provide people the power to take control of their health.

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