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OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER!



Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers in women – in South Africa and globally. You'll be glad to know that the Scheme offers specific oncology benefits if you (or a registered dependant) are diagnosed with this and other cancers. However, prevention and screening tests also play an important role, and that's where the Scheme and you both have a part to play.



PREVENTION

- More and more research shows a strong link between an unhealthy lifestyle (and being overweight or obese) and cancer.
- Aim for a healthy diet with minimal refined carbohydrates and sugars. Incorporate regular exercise, mindfulness, sleeping well, and getting some healthy sun exposure to increase vitamin D levels to help your body fight off potential cancers.



SCREENING

- The earlier you catch cancer, or potentially cancerous cells, the better your chances of survival.
- Female members are urged to do monthly breast self-examinations (see more about this in the below section).
- Make use of the Scheme's cover for mammograms (every two years) for female members and dependants over the age of 40 to 74 years. This screening is covered from your separate Preventative Benefits and will not impact your day-to-day benefits.



TREATMENT

Being diagnosed with cancer is frightening, and worrying about medical costs is the last thing you want to do at such a time.

Should you receive a cancer diagnosis, it will be to your advantage to register on the Scheme's Oncology Management Programme before starting any treatment. This programme will not only help you to manage the high costs associated with treatment, but you will also receive help, support and education on your condition from your Oncology Case Manager.

It will also ensure that health services related to oncology, such as your doctor's consultations, general and specialised radiology and pathology during follow-up visits to the doctor, will be covered from your oncology benefit. By obtaining authorisation you are also ensuring that your treatment is effectively managed within your available benefits.

MORE INFORMATION: ☎ 0860 100 572 ✉ cancerinfo@medscheme.co.za

EASY STEPS FOR A BREAST SELF-EXAMINATION AT HOME

While breast self-examinations at home can't replace a medical check-up, they are still very useful in finding any abnormalities or changes to your breasts. If you do find a lump or show any of the other symptoms listed below, make an appointment with your doctor. The good news is that experts agree that 8 out of 10 lumps are not cancerous and can be easily removed.



VISUAL

- Stand in front of a mirror, undress, and start observing.
- Keep your hands at your sides and then clasp them above your head to look at your breasts at different angles.
- Look for any changes in contour, swelling, dimpling of skin, or any differences around the nipple, especially if it's in just one of the breasts.



FEEL AROUND

- Either stand up in the shower or lie down with a pillow under the breast you're checking.
- Use the pads of your fingers (not just the tips) to thoroughly feel around, and with different levels of pressure.
- Press down all around the breasts and under your armpits in a methodical pattern and make sure to squeeze the nipples to check for any discharge.
- You should be looking out for any lumps, thickening, hardening, or knots at this step.

SYMPTOMS OF BREAST CANCER



A constant pain in the armpit or one part of the breast



A change in colour, with the breasts looking red or inflamed



Dimples, puckers, bulges, or ridges on the skin



Flaky skin, itchiness, sores, or rash



The nipple becomes irregular in shape or sinks into the breast



Unusual discharge from one or both of the nipples

References:

- <https://www.gov.za/BreastCancerAwarenessMonth2023>
- <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/03-08-00/03-08-002023.pdf>
- <https://breast-cancer-research.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13058-023-01603-w>
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- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/treatment-tests-and-therapies/mammogram-procedure>
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- <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/when-should-you-start-getting-mammograms-your-doctor-can-help-you-decide>

Regards
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