

For Immediate Release
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National Breast Cancer Awareness Month: A Coachella Valley Perspective

Palm Desert, CA (October 12, 2017) – October marks National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a national health observance designed to raise awareness and promote early detection and treatment of breast cancer. Local nonprofit HARC, Inc. (Health Assessment and Research for Communities) provides an in-depth look into breast cancer and available resources for our local residents.

What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer involves excessive cell growth in the breasts and typically, the formation of a tumor. There are different types of breast cancer, and these types depend on the location in which the cancer cells formed. Most often, this will begin in the ducts or lobules, resulting in ductal carcinoma or lobular carcinoma. These cancer cells can also spread (metastasize) to other parts of the body.

Breast cancer will affect different people in a variety of ways. Because of this, sometimes symptoms are not even present. However, the Centers for Disease Control has some signs to be on the lookout for. These include new lumps (breast or armpit), thickening/swelling, irritation or dimpling, redness or flaky skin, pain in any area, nipple discharge other than breast milk, and size/shape changes.

How Common is Breast Cancer?

While breast cancer affects both men and women, it's significantly more common in the latter. In fact, breast cancer is the second most common type of cancer among women, and the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths among many groups of women. For the year of 2017 alone, the American Cancer Society estimates that more than 250,000 cases of invasive breast cancer occur among women in the United States.

In the Coachella Valley, breast cancer is the second-most common type of cancer (following skin cancer). In fact, HARC's data shows that 20.8% of people diagnosed with cancer have had breast cancer. That's more than 6,900 local adults who have had breast cancer.

What Can You Do?

Breast cancer can be detected early on with mammograms, breast MRIs, and clinical breasts exams. While screening does not prevent breast cancer, it can help to catch breast cancer early, making treatment easier and increasing life expectancy.

Fortunately, most females (93%) over age 40 in the Coachella Valley have received a mammogram, as illustrated by HARC's community research. The majority of these women (83%) received a mammogram within the last two years, which is consistent with medical recommendations. Women who are age 40+ who've never had a mammogram (about 7,000 women) and those who haven't had one in the past two years (more than 16,900 women) should schedule one today in order to protect their health.

Local Resources

The Coachella Valley has a strong support system for people who are diagnosed with cancer, and for their networks. Here are a few of the local organizations dedicated to supporting people with cancer:

- Desert Cancer Foundation provides cancer treatment assistance for individuals with cancer in the Coachella Valley. This local nonprofit helps individuals who need financial assistance to obtain screening, diagnosis, and treatment for cancer.
- Cancer Partners (formerly Gilda's Club Desert Cities) offers emotional, social, and educational support for everyone impacted by cancer in the Coachella Valley, including caregivers and family members. They offer support groups, educational activities, and social activities.

To learn more about breast cancer, please visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast

About HARC

HARC is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization based in Palm Desert, CA. HARC provides research and evaluation services in the field of health, wellness, and quality of life, with a special focus on the Coachella Valley. To learn more about HARC, visit www.HARCdata.org