

# Focus on CANCER



PLATINUM  
HEALTH

## Breast Cancer

One of the greatest fears for a woman is breast cancer. 1 in 33 women in South Africa is at risk. The earlier breast cancer is diagnosed, the more treatment options there are available, and the greater the chance of long-term survival. Do monthly self-examinations and visit your doctor if you notice anything abnormal.

### Breast self-examination guidelines

#### STEP 1:

Stand in front of the mirror, and look carefully for any changes to your breasts, looking at their symmetry, shape and size. If you see any of the following changes, bring them to your doctor's attention:

- Dimpling, puckering, or bulging of the skin
- A nipple that has changed position or an inverted nipple (pushed inward instead of sticking out)
- Redness, soreness, rash, or swelling.

#### STEP 2:

Stand with one hand behind your head. With the other hand, gently examine your breast; in a circular motion, feeling for any lumps, thickening or changes (don't forget to check your armpit). Repeat with the other hand. Remember to feel all the parts of each breast with your fingertips.

#### STEP 3:

Next, feel your breasts while lying down, using your right hand to feel your left breast and then your left hand to feel your right breast. Use a firm, smooth touch with the first few finger pads of your hand, keeping the fingers flat and together. Use a circular motion, about the size of a R5 coin. Cover the entire breast from top to bottom, side to side — from your collarbone to the top of your abdomen, and from your armpit to your cleavage.

## Cervical Cancer

Platinum Health reminds women of the vital role regular Pap smears play in the detection, and elimination, of cervical cancer. Nearly 11 000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer annually in South Africa, making it the second most common cancer among women as well as having the highest mortality rate among women. But cervical cancer is a preventable disease and can be cured if detected and treated in its early stages.

The most common cause of cervical cancer is the human papilloma virus, which, is a common sexually transmitted infection. It does not affect men, although they are carriers of the virus. Factors that increase a woman's risk of developing cervical cancer include early sexual activity, multiple sexual partners, and smoking.

### Screening guidelines for Cervical Cancer:

- **21 to 29 years old:**  
Start getting Pap tests at age 21, repeat every 3 years (unless otherwise indicated by your doctor)
- **30 to 65 years old:**  
Begin co-testing (Pap test combined with an HPV test) every 5 years, or get a Pap test every 3 years. Discuss your options with your doctor.
- **65+ years old:**  
Stop screening if you have had normal results for several years.

