Support and Resources

If you are diagnosed with breast cancer, remember that you are not alone. There are many resources available to support you, including:

- **Support Groups**: Many communities offer breast cancer support groups where you can connect with others who are going through similar experiences.
- **Counseling Services**: Professional counseling can help you cope with the emotional impact of a breast cancer diagnosis.
- **Educational Resources**: Websites like Breast Cancer Now and Macmillan Cancer Support offer a wealth of information on treatment options, coping strategies, and more.

Take Action Today

Being informed and proactive is your best defense against breast cancer. Stay vigilant about any changes in your breasts, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and ensure you attend regular screenings. Early detection could save your life.

For more information or to schedule a screening, contact your GP or visit:

Breast Cancer Now https://breastcancernow.org

Macmillan Cancer Support
https://www.macmillan.org.uk

Harbourside Family Practice

Marina Healthcare Centre

2 Haven View

Portishead

BS20 7QA

Tel: 01275 868500

Email: reception.harbourside@nhs.net



Harbourside
Family Practice

Breast Cancer Awareness: A Guide to Symptoms, Prevention, and Screening



Understanding Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer affecting women worldwide. It occurs when cells in the breast grow uncontrollably, forming a tumour. While it is more common in women, men can also develop breast cancer, although it is rare.

Symptoms to Watch For

Being familiar with how your breasts normally look and feel is the first step towards detecting any changes. Early detection of breast cancer greatly increases the chances of successful treatment. It is crucial to be aware of the following symptoms and seek medical advice if you notice any of them:

- **A lump or thickening in the breast or underarm**: This is often the first noticeable symptom. While not all lumps are cancerous, they should be examined by a healthcare provider.
- **Changes in breast size or shape**: Unexplained changes could be an early sign of cancer.
- **Nipple discharge or inversion**: Any unexpected discharge, particularly if it is bloody, or a nipple that suddenly becomes inverted should be checked.
- **Skin changes on the breast**: Redness, dimpling, or puckering (resembling an orange peel) may indicate underlying cancer.
- **Persistent pain in the breast or nipple**: While pain is not commonly associated with breast cancer, any persistent discomfort should be evaluated.

Prevention: What You Can Do

While some risk factors like age, family history, and genetics cannot be changed, there are several steps you can take to lower your risk of developing breast cancer:

- **Maintain a Healthy Weight**: Being overweight or obese increases the risk of breast cancer, especially after menopause. Aim to keep a balanced diet and engage in regular physical activity.
- **Limit Alcohol Consumption**: Research indicates that alcohol consumption increases the risk of breast cancer. Limit intake to no more than one drink per day.
- **Avoid Tobacco**: Smoking is linked to many types of cancer, including breast cancer. Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your overall health.
- **Breastfeeding:** If possible, breastfeeding for a total of one year or more (combined for all children) can reduce the risk of breast cancer.
- **Limit Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT):** Long-term use of HRT for managing menopausal symptoms has been linked to an increased risk of breast cancer. Discuss alternatives with your healthcare provider.

Screening: Early Detection Saves Lives

Regular screening is the most effective way to detect breast cancer early. The earlier breast cancer is found, the easier it is to treat. Here's what you need to know about screening:

- **Mammograms**: A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast that can detect tumors that are too small to be felt. It is recommended that women start having regular mammograms at age 50, but this may vary depending on personal risk factors. Women with a higher risk of breast cancer, such as those with a family history, may need to start screening earlier and have them more frequently.
- **Self-Examinations**: While not a substitute for mammograms, regular self-examinations can help you become familiar with how your breasts normally feel and look. This can make it easier to notice any changes.
- **Clinical Breast Exams**: These are physical exams performed by a healthcare provider. They are typically part of a routine check-up.

When to see a Doctor

If you notice any changes in your breasts, such as a lump, skin changes, or nipple discharge, schedule an appointment with your GP immediately. Even if it turns out to be nothing serious, it’s better to be safe and catch potential issues early.