

# Breast Health and Early Detection

## A Q&A with Charu Taneja, MD, Breast Surgeon & Surgical Oncologist

October is designated as Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the startling fact is that American women face a one-in-eight chance of developing the disease over the course of their lifetime. But other facts are important, too. Researchers have made giant strides in understanding breast cancer and how it can be detected and defeated. And they are even shedding light on preventive strategies. While still a serious problem, the truth is that breast cancer is almost always curable if it's discovered and treated in time.

### **Q: How important is early detection to the treatment of breast cancer?**

Dr. Taneja: Very important - typically you can pick up an early breast cancer through a screening mammography approximately two years before you will even feel a lump in the breast. As a result of enhanced awareness and the increased use of screening mammograms, more and more early breast cancers are being diagnosed, when the disease is still very curable.

### **Q: Are mammograms beneficial, and how often do you recommend them?**

Dr. Taneja: Nowadays, 40 percent of breast cancer is diagnosed at stage I due to the use of screening mammograms. We recommend starting mammograms at age 40, and annually afterward.

### **Q: Who is most at risk for developing breast cancer?**

Dr. Taneja: Family history accounts for only 10 percent of breast cancers, though breast cancer is one of the most common cancers of women. In the USA, about one in eight women will get breast cancer in their lifetime. It is more common in middle-aged to older women, which is why we usually start mammograms at a later age. Other risk factors include a personal history of atypical cells in the breasts on previous biopsies. The use of hormone replacement therapy also increases the risk of breast cancer.

### **Q: Is there anything a woman can do to help prevent her chances of being diagnosed with breast cancer?**

Dr. Taneja: Obesity and smoking increase the risk of all cancers, not just breast cancer - so eating healthy, exercising and avoiding smoking is important. I also encourage women to be proactive about their breast health. In addition to mammograms, women should perform self breast exams and not hesitate to contact their provider if they feel or see any changes in their breasts.

### **Q: How is Morton Hospital unique in treating patients diagnosed with breast cancer or breast diseases?**

Dr. Taneja: It is always better for women when they can receive all their care locally in the community where they have a lot of support from family and friends. Morton Hospital has a surgical oncologist with years of experience and interest in treating breast cancer (me), as well as a multidisciplinary team of specialists who work collaboratively to provide women with the best treatment options.

To learn more about Dr. Taneja and breast care services at Morton Hospital, visit [www.steward.org/Morton](http://www.steward.org/Morton). To make an appointment for a screening mammogram at Morton Hospital's Women's Imaging Center, call 508-828-7690.

## **Chat Live Online with Dr. Taneja on October 25**

Join Dr. Charu Taneja, along with breast cancer survivor and WCVB-TV 5 award-winning reporter, Kelley Tuthill, for an online Steward Live Chat on Friday, Oct. 25 at 1 p.m. This event, moderated by Mary Richardson, Steward community liaison and former host of TV's "Chronicle," gives you direct access to discuss the latest information on issues concerning women's health - specifically breast cancer screenings, the latest treatments, genetic testing and living with breast cancer. To submit your questions for Dr. Taneja and Kelley Tuthill, or to sign up for the event, register today at [Steward.org/LiveChats](http://Steward.org/LiveChats).

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