

Breast cancer screening: No bother at all

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When should you do this? Monthly breast self-examination starting by age 25 is recommended. Clinical breast examination by a trained medical professional at least every three years starting at age 25, and annually after 40 years old.

RISK FACTORS

Studies have shown that the risk of getting breast cancer depends on a combination of factors. Having one or more risk factors does not mean you will get the cancer, but being aware of them can help you to take protective steps to reduce the risk.

They include –

FAMILY HISTORY

Certain inherited genes

History of malignant or benign (non-cancerous) breast disease

Early onset of menstruation

Late menopause

Having first child after the age of 35

Having fewer children or never had children

Being on hormone replacement therapy

Drinking too much alcohol

Being overweight or obese

It is possible to get breast cancer even if you have none of these risk factors.

Regular screening and breast self-examination are thus important, as you may not see any symptoms of early-stage cancer, such as a lump, nipple inversion, unusual discharge, ulceration, pain, or skin changes on the breast and nipple.

You can also reduce your risk through lifestyle choices such as maintaining a healthy weight by having a balanced diet, exercising regularly, limiting your intake of alcohol, and not smoking (or quitting if you smoke).

Breast cancer survival rates have improved as a result of advancement in surgical procedures, the availability of effective chemotherapeutic agents, and breakthroughs in targeted therapy. However, the best weapon against breast cancer is still awareness: Know your body, know your risks and early detection.

BREAST SELF-EXAMINATION: WHAT TO DO

1. Look into a mirror, keeping your shoulders straight and your arms on your hips. Check your breasts and nipples for any rash, redness, swelling or changes such as a nipple that has become inverted (pushed inward instead of sticking out).

2. While still in front of the mirror, raise your arms and look for the same changes as in step (1).

3. Squeeze each nipple gently to see if there is any discharge such as a watery, milky, or yellow fluid or blood.

4. Lie down and feel each breast. Keeping your fingers flat and close together, use your right hand to feel the left breast and vice-versa. Use a circular motion from top to bottom and side to side – from collarbone to abdomen, from armpit to cleavage. Begin with a soft touch, and increase pressure to feel the deeper tissue. Cover the entire breast.

Do the same as in step (4) while standing or sitting.

Screening

When and what

If you are...

Over 25 years old —

Monthly breast self-examination (BSE)

40-49 years old —

Monthly BSE

Yearly mammogram +/- ultrasound scan

50 years old and above —

Monthly BSE

Mammogram +/- ultrasound scan every two years

For further enquiry, please do not hesitate to contact CanHope Dhaka, Suite-B3, Level-4, House-10, Road-53 Gulshan, Dhaka. Call 019 7777 0 777 or email: zeba@parkwayhealth.net



KUNDALINI RISING

BY SHAZIA OMAR

Writer, activist and yogini
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Tête-à-tête with

Michela Accerenzi

How did you get interested in yoga?

When I moved to Dhaka and was invited to a yogilates' class, I did not know what to expect, but after the very first class with Shazia Omar, I knew I had found something I needed.

I liked the combination of movement, stretching and breathing, and the feeling of wellness I felt afterwards. A friend later invited me to a full moon meditation, and I loved it.

Little by little, my interest in yoga grew, I started researching on the Internet, reading books, signing up for meditation courses, 'pranayama' courses and yoga workshops.

Yoga made me feel very good not just physically, but also mentally.

Where did you learn yoga? What kind of yoga do you teach and where?

I wanted to learn the tradition of yoga from its origins, so I decided the best place was India, the very cradle of yoga. After researching a little, I chose a course focused on classical 'hatha yoga' of the Sivananda lineage and travelled to Khajuraho to stay in the ashram of Arhanta Yoga School.

I completed my 200-hour teacher training course in November 2012. Since then, I have gone on to teach yoga as a way to share and give back to the community. Up until now, I have taught yoga in Spain, Gambia, Italy, and Honduras. I am now teaching one class a week to help the Centre of Arts and Patrimony of Santa Rosa de Copan, the city I live in.

In what ways has yoga benefited you?

It has been one of the best things that happened to me. I have hyperlordosis by birth, and yoga helped me to improve my posture and have less back pain. I have gained much more body awareness, I know myself more and I better understand what I need. For me, it has been a process of self-discovery, self-understanding, and self-acceptance. It also helps me to improve my breathing capacity (I love pranayamas!) and feeling less stressed.

It taught me to be more accepting of life and not let external events control my reactions.

Describe a typical day in your life.

When I am at home, I wake up around 6AM, have a quick breakfast and shower, and then I sit for some pranayama and

meditation, before heading to work. After work, I arrive home, have half an hour of rest and then practice my asana (one to one and a half hour).

When I travel, it is much more difficult to keep up with my schedule. Travelling can involve meetings or visiting farms, rural schools or villages, and I do not have a fixed schedule, but I always pack my yoga mat with me and practice when I can.

I also try to receive yoga classes when on holiday to improve my practice and learn different ways of teaching. I sometimes take classes online from a teacher I really admire Cris Aramburo because unfortunately, where I work, there are not any yoga studios.

What advice do you have for someone who has never tried yoga?

I would advise to try different styles and teachers if possible. I would also suggest patience, going slow, and really paying attention to what your body is telling you. And finally, take some time for yourself each and every day. If you do not like yoga, then find something you feel passionate about that allows you to slow down and have a break from the stress in your daily life.

What advice do you have for yoga practitioners?

Yoga is a never ending journey of discovery, and each body is different. Yoga can teach you much, but only if you do not force yourself and if you learn to control your ego.

What are some of the things you do to take care of the world or yourself that you have learned along your journey?

I am a vegetarian, feminist, anticapitalistic yogini, and I cannot separate these things. Through them, I am trying to make a difference in the world. What I have learnt along my journey is to be more flexible, not only physically, but also mentally, and therefore be more accepting of the differences in the world.

I am less judgmental than I used to be, calmer and more attentive. I have understood that you need to balance strength and flexibility on and outside the mat. I try to be very coherent and be an example of what I speak about.

Photo: Shazia Omar