**October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month**

**Tip of the Month from Your Health & Wellness Committee**

While most people are aware of breast cancer, many forget to take the steps to have a plan to detect the disease in its early stages and encourage others to do the same. The disease occurs almost entirely in women, but men can get it, too.

Breast cancers that are found because they are causing [symptoms](http://www.cancer.org/ssLINK/breast-cancer-early-detection-signs-symptoms-br-ca) tend to be larger and are more likely to have already spread beyond the breast. In contrast, breast cancers found during screening exams are more likely to be smaller and still confined to the breast. The size of a breast cancer and how far it has spread are some of the most important factors in predicting the *prognosis* (outlook) of a woman with this disease.

Studies show that lifestyle contributes to the risk of breast cancer. Keeping a healthy weight, getting regular exercise and enough sleep can help lower your risk of breast cancer. Not smoking, and limiting your alcohol intake will also have a positive impact. Reducing your exposure to radiation during medical tests (X-rays, CT scans, even mammograms) will also help lower your risk.

No matter your lifestyle, most doctors feel that early detection tests for breast cancer save thousands of lives each year. Following the [American Cancer Society’s guidelines for the early detection of breast cancer](http://www.cancer.org/ssLINK/breast-cancer-early-detection-acs-recs) improves the chances that breast cancer can be diagnosed at an early stage and treated successfully. Here is a brief synopsis:

* **Women age 40 and older should have a mammogram every year and should continue to do so for as long as they are in good health.**
* **Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam (CBE) as part of a periodic (regular) health exam by a health professional preferably every 3 years. Starting at age 40, women should have a CBE by a health professional every year.**
* **Breast self-exam (BSE) is an option for women starting in their 20s. Women should be told about the benefits and limitations of BSE. Women should report any breast changes to their health professional right away.**
* **Women who are at high risk for breast cancer based on certain factors should get an MRI and a mammogram every year.**

Early detection is important! According to the American Cancer Society, when breast cancer is detected early, in the localized stage, the 5-year relative survival rate is 100%.

*If you or a loved one are currently experiencing cancer, the* ***Cancer Support Community – Redondo Beach*** *offers a wonderful free program of information, education and hope for people with cancer and their loved ones. Call (310) 376-3550 or visit* [*www.cancersupportredondobeach.org*](http://www.cancersupportredondobeach.org)*.*