

Locks of Love launched in support of Breast Health Month

Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in South Africa. According to the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA), one in every 29 women in South Africa is affected. "The good news," says breast health expert Dr Carol Benn, "is that if it's detected and treated early, there is an excellent chance of recovery. Nine out of 10 women diagnosed with early breast cancer will be alive after five years and those who survive for five years, will very likely live their normal lifespan."



The majority - up to 90% - of breast cancer cases are self-diagnosed, which is why it's so important for women to know the danger signs and to know how to do a breast self-examination. To spread the word, Novartis Oncology teamed up with Carlton Hair and initiated the Locks of Love campaign to highlight the importance of breast health during Breast Health Month in October.

There's a very good reason why women need to be proactive about breast health since 70% of all women who are diagnosed with breast cancer have no identifiable risk factors.

Most lumps are not cancer

"There's no place for complacency," says Dr Benn. "If you are a woman over 40, do an annual mammogram and ultrasound and go for a clinical examination. And it's vitally important for women of all ages to do a monthly breast self-examination - nine out of 10 breast lumps are detected by women themselves. That said, it's important to remember that the vast majority of breast lumps are not cancer, so if you find a lump in your breast, do not be afraid to go to your doctor."

"Women are key to our company and we want them to know we care. When it comes to breast health, knowledge is definitely power. We will have pink reminders everywhere - pink coasters, information cards, branded t-shirts for staff and pink mammogram 'mo-mints' in glass jars", says Byron Mayer, MD of Carlton Hair.

Breast cancer treatments are continuously advancing and today it's largely curable. Breast cancer can be treated in various ways, including chemotherapy, radiotherapy, surgery and biological therapy. "If diagnosed, take your time to investigate your options and fully understand your situation," says Dr Benn. "Also know that the old fears of disfigurement are no longer valid. If a surgical procedure is required, immediate breast construction is today usually a prescribed minimum benefit on medical schemes."

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