

FIRST PERSON

By Thomas S. Chang, M.D.

Help Fight Breast Cancer This Mother's Day

For most women, breast cancer is a scary disease. It's estimated that one out of eight American women will develop breast cancer during their lifetimes. That's a lot of women! It would not be a stretch to say that nearly everyone knows someone who has had breast cancer. As for me, my wife's aunt survived her breast cancer, but one of our close friends sadly succumbed to hers at the youthful age of 45.

With breast cancer all around us, what can you do to help fight this dreaded disease? One way is to join the **Susan G. Komen Pittsburgh Race for the Cure** (www.pittsburghraceforthecure.org).

Held every Mother's Day, the Race raises money to fund breast cancer research, education, screening and treatment. Part of the Race proceeds goes to the internationally renowned organization, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, and the rest remains in western Pennsylvania to promote local breast health. For uninsured and underinsured women in our area, the Mammogram Voucher Program (www.mammogramvoucher.org) provides free mammograms and follow-up diagnostic services, tests that might otherwise have been skipped because of their cost.

Now in its 16th year, the Race has grown in size by leaps and bounds and ranks among the top 10 (out of 117) Races for the Cure in the country. That's impressive for a city of our size.

Although there is a timed, competitive 5K race, most participants in the Race do a noncompetitive jog or a 1-mile Fun Walk to show their support. Everyone is welcome. Participants range in age from infants in strollers to their great-grandparents. There's a wonderful sense of camaraderie in the air. It's something I look forward to doing with my family every year.

After the Race, we (especially the kids) enjoy visiting the sponsors' booths where we can get free drinks, bagels, yogurt, ice cream, pens, notepads and the like, and sign up for raffles. One of the local radio stations broadcasts live from the Race and has dance contests and line dances. It's a fun, festive atmosphere.

If you've never been to the Pittsburgh Race for the Cure, please join us. It's for a great cause and, in our sedentary lifestyles, it's a nice way to get some exercise, fresh air and, if we're lucky,



Drs. Thomas Chang, Barbara Ward, Michelle Straka, and Marcela Böhm-Vélez

sunshine. This Mother's Day, do something meaningful for your own or someone else's mother by Racing for the Cure. And say 'hi' to us in our bright yellow shirts.

Tips to Improve Your Mammogram Experience

- If you have sensitive breasts, schedule your mammogram shortly after your period, when the breasts are the least sensitive. Refrain from caffeine (including chocolate) for a couple of days prior to your mammogram and take ibuprofen, naproxen or acetaminophen before leaving home.
- If you get anxious about your mammogram results, consider having your test done at a facility that gives results the same day or, even better, can do any necessary additional testing the same day.
- Do not use deodorant under your arms or lotion on your breasts. They may interfere with the mammogram pictures and necessitate retaking some of the pictures.
- Wear a two-piece outfit so that you can keep your bottom on under your gown during the mammogram. You'll feel more comfortable that way.
- If the mammogram is uncomfortable or painful, do not hesitate to tell the technologist. She can alter the positioning of the breast or the amount of compression to alleviate discomfort.

And remember to get your mammogram every year (age 40 and over) and do a self-examination of your breasts every month. ■

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