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WOMEN CONSIDER MASTECTOMY TO REDUCE THEIR RISK OF BREAST CANCER

Pink Ribbon Day - 24 OCTOBER 2011

Six out of ten Australian women would consider having both breasts removed if they were found to be at very high risk of breast cancer, according to survey results released today by Cancer Australia.

The survey conducted by Newspoll, also indicated that younger women were just as likely as women aged over 50 to consider mastectomy as a risk-reducing measure.

Cancer Australia Chief Executive Officer Dr Helen Zorbas said, "The survey indicates that women of all ages wish to be proactive and would consider taking significant steps to reduce their risk of developing breast cancer.

"Only a small proportion of women will be faced with such difficult and confronting decisions, that impact not only on the woman at risk, but also her family and relationships."

The survey also revealed many misconceptions about family history as a breast cancer risk factor.

"Less than one percent of the female population is potentially at high risk of breast cancer, based on their family history. Yet eight out of 10 women incorrectly assume a woman is at high risk if just one of her relatives had the disease," Dr Zorbas said.

"In fact, the significance of a family history increases with the number of family members affected, the younger their age at diagnosis and the closer the relation."

Half of women surveyed were also not aware that the family history of the father's side is just as important as the mother's side in determining breast cancer risk.

Over 14,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in Australia this year.

Dr Zorbas said women of all ages can make some simple lifestyle choices to reduce their risk such as exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy body weight and keeping alcohol intake to less than two standard drinks a day.

Women can assess their risk using Cancer Australia's [breast cancer risk calculator](#) and those who are concerned about their level of risk should see their GP for assessment.

The impact of familial risk of breast cancer will be the theme at Cancer Australia's Pink Ribbon Breakfast today (Monday, 24 October) at the Four Seasons Hotel, Sydney.

To access the risk calculator or for more information, visit www.canceraustralia.gov.au

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In July 2011, Cancer Australia and National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre (NBOCC) amalgamated to form a single national agency, Cancer Australia, to provide leadership in cancer control and improve outcomes for Australians affected by cancer.