

Breast cancer is the most common cancer and the second most common cause of death from cancer in women. Because of the high frequency of the disease and the esthetic and symbolic value invested in the breast, breast cancer has always been a source of severe distress to patients and their families. For the same reasons, breast cancer research has increased dramatically during the last 2 decades, resulting in extraordinary progress in our understanding of the disease and in new, more efficient and less toxic treatments. Furthermore, the diffusion of knowledge, the medical advancements, and the increased public awareness have led to earlier diagnosis at stages usually amenable to complete resection and potential cure of the disease. In this paper concentration will be on prevention of breast cancer including primary prevention which is the elimination of risk factors for the disease in asymptomatic persons which aim to reduce the incidence of new cases in a population, second prevention is early detection and treatment of disease but it is important to keep in mind that secondary prevention detects cancer but does not decrease their occurrence. It can however reduce mortality.

Frequency: The American Cancer Society estimated that 193,700 new cases of breast cancer (31% of all cancers) would be diagnosed in 2001 in the United States, making breast cancer the most-diagnosed cancer in women. The true incidence rates of breast cancer have been stable from 1987-1996 after a constant increase since 1979 (increase of 1% per y from 1979-1982; 4% per y from 1982-1987). The lack of decline of breast cancer incidence in the 1990s contrasts with a slight decline (decline of 1.3% per y from 1992-1997) of the incidence rate of cancer for all sites.

Although the death rate from breast cancer has decreased an average of 2.2% per year from 1990-1997, the recorded number of deaths from breast cancer has remained stable, at approximately 43,000 per year. Deaths dropped to 41,737 in 1998 after reaching the highest number, 43,844, in 1995. Among women aged 20-59 years, breast cancer is the leading cause of death from cancer. However, lung cancer remains the leading cause of death from cancer in women aged 60 years or older.