

Review of the Literature of Risk Factors for Breast Cancer in Adolescent and Young Adult Women (15-39 years of age)

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Team Shan Breast Cancer Awareness for Young Women (Team Shan) is a national charity dedicated to educating the public, health care professionals and young women about early detection, risk reduction and prevention of breast cancer. Team Shan has developed a comprehensive social marketing model to reach young women in Canada with their breast cancer risk and breast health information. Team Shan has regularly commissioned literature reviews on the current evidence available on breast cancer in young women. The reviews have guided Team Shan breast cancer awareness campaign messaging and efforts to reach this population at risk.

Team Shan's most recent literature review was completed in late 2015. The goal of this review was to collate, assess, and synthesize the currently available literature of a) the incidence and risk factors for breast cancers in women 39 years of age or younger and b) to review and synthesize information on promotional programs to increase awareness and knowledge of the general public and/or healthcare providers regarding the incidence of and risk factors for breast cancers in younger women, and promotional programs to increase awareness and skills for self-detection of symptoms of breast cancers in young women.

Based on the information highlighted in this literature review, the authors suggested the following recommendations:

- *Inform the public about the potential risk to young women.*
 - Although breast cancer is uncommon in women younger than 40 years of age, they, their parents, and medical practitioners need to know that cancer, including breast cancer, is *not* a disease limited to older adults.
- *Educate the public about the risk factors for breast cancer in young women.*
 - Although many young women develop breast cancer without having any known risk factors, those with known risk factors (such as a family history) need to understand their increased risk and communicate them to their healthcare providers.
 - Many risk factors for young women cannot be changed or are not easily modifiable making it difficult to avoid exposure. However, women at higher risk of breast cancer should consider the benefits and harms of exposure to known risk factors.
 - Some risk factors (such as family history) are not within an individual's control. However, maintaining a healthy lifestyle by following Canada's Food Guide, maintaining a body mass index in the normal range (18.5-24.9), being physically active, smoke-free, and alcohol-free may reduce the risk of breast cancer in the long term.

- *Educate healthcare providers about the potential risk of, and risk factors for, breast cancer in young women*
 - Healthcare providers must understand the incidence of breast cancer and the risk factors for breast cancer so women of all ages, including young women, can be appropriately and adequately screened and tested.
- *Promote breast awareness AND early communication of changes to healthcare providers.*
 - Knowing what is normal for each individual can lead to early recognition of potential health problems if the information is then communicated to healthcare providers.
 - Promoting breast awareness, including breast self-checks, is important for young women, most of whom should not receive screening mammograms.
- *Health promotion campaigns should:*
 - Provide basic, accurate, credible health information.
 - Encourage appraisal of reliability of information and accurate perceptions of personal risk.
 - Build competence in essential skills such as knowing your body or body self-awareness.
 - Encourage communication of changes or concerns with parents and healthcare providers.
 - Use strategies designed to personalize information, maintain interest, and motivate behaviour.
 - Include input and feedback from the target audience (adolescents and young adults).
 - Include parents of adolescents and young adults and healthcare providers as secondary target groups.

The full report and other Team Shan publications are available at www.teamshan.ca/publications
 Follow Team Shan on Facebook at www.facebook.com/team.shan.ca Twitter @TeamShan and
 Instagram at [_teamshan](https://www.instagram.com/_teamshan). Contact Team Shan at teamshan@gmail.com.

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