

Embargoed till 1 October 2021

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH 2021 BUDDY UP FOR BREAST HEALTH

- In 2019, despite the high awareness level of mammography screening for breast cancer, only 38.7% in the 50 to 69 age group reported that they had gone for a mammography within the last 2 years.¹
- The theme for this year's Breast Cancer Awareness Month encourages women and the community to support each other for breast health through buddying up to attend mammogram screening together.
- Join the Pink Plank Challenge to raise awareness that regular exercise reduces one's risk of breast cancer.

Singapore, 29th September 2021 – Themed “Buddy Up To Beat Breast Cancer”, the national Breast Cancer Awareness Month (BCAM) 2021 Campaign led by Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) aims to encourage women to go for mammogram screening and raise breast cancer awareness with the support of their family and peers by opening up conversations that may help to overcome their fear, anxiety and uncertainty. With the support from within their circle, the committee hopes that everyone will take the first step towards beating breast cancer.

In Singapore, breast cancer remains the leading cancer among women. It is also the leading cause of cancer deaths in women. Regular screening can detect breast cancer early and timely intervention can save lives.

The 2019 National Population Health Survey showed that 9 in 10 (94.4%) Singapore female residents aged 50 to 69 years were aware of mammography. Despite the high awareness level, only 38.7% in this age group reported that they had gone for a mammography within the last 2 years.¹ The top 3 reasons cited by women in the 50 to 69 age group who had never undergone mammography were:

1. “Not necessary as I am healthy” (37.0%);
2. “Painful test” (18.3%); and
3. “Afraid of knowing the results” (12.3%)

¹ National Population Health Survey 2019 Report, Ministry of Health and Health Promotion Board Singapore. .

² Singapore Cancer Registry Annual Report 2018

³ Pizot C, Boniol M, Mullie P et al. Physical activity, hormone replacement therapy and breast cancer risk: A meta-analysis of prospective studies. Eur J Cancer 2016; 52:138-54.

The evolving COVID-19 situation and the various response measures to the pandemic, including the temporary suspension of screening activities in healthcare facilities and the implementation of other safe management measures, impacted health screening behaviours in 2020, highlighting the importance of health screening remains a priority. Each year, over 2,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer² and women must continue to go for regular breast cancer screening even when they feel healthy, as they continue to take the necessary COVID-19 related precautions. When breast cancer is detected at an early stage, treatment is easier, and patients have a higher chance of a full recovery.

Clinical Associate Professor Veronique Tan, Chairperson of Singapore Cancer Society Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign Committee, and Head and Senior Consultant of the SingHealth Duke-NUS Breast Centre and Department of Breast Surgery, Division of Surgery and Surgical Oncology, Singapore General Hospital (SGH) and National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) said, “Based on the Singapore Cancer Registry 50th Anniversary Monograph, it is estimated that 1 in 13 women in Singapore will develop breast cancer before the age of 75. Women above the age of 50 years old are strongly encouraged to go for regular mammogram screening to check for abnormalities even when they feel perfectly well and healthy. Having a mammogram is a simple process and the slight discomfort is worth it if a cancer is detected at an early stage. I urge everyone to be an advocate and give your loved ones a nudge if you know that they have yet to go for their mammogram screening.”

In 2020, SCS supported more than 16,000 women with their mammogram screening by providing a \$25 funding assistance to each eligible participant. Women between 50 to 69 years of age can continue to enjoy funding assistance again this year if they book an appointment with participating screening centres island-wide during the month of October and November.

“It is important for women to make healthier choices in their lifestyle and go for regular screening so as to detect breast cancer early to improve treatment outcome. SCS’ strategy of cancer education and increasing cancer screening uptake plays a critical role. Amidst the COVID-19 situation in Singapore, SCS continues to reach out to the community using new tools and platforms

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to ensure that education on cancer and screening remains accessible to everyone,” said Mr Albert Ching, Chief Executive Officer, SCS.

United Virtually for Breast Cancer Awareness

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the National BCAM Organising Committee, chaired by SCS and comprising Breast Cancer Foundation (BCF), Health Promotion Board (HPB), National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS), National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS) and Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), will hold a series of online events to raise awareness of breast cancer.

SCS will be launching the Pink Ribbon Virtual Launch Party on 1st October 2021, 8pm live on Facebook and the event features an interesting line-up of medical experts, a breast cancer survivor as well as celebrity guests. There will also be a behind-the-scenes segment bringing viewers into a mammogram screening room as we debunk some of the misconceptions commonly associated with breast cancer screening.

Dr Koh Poh Koon, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Manpower, will be the Guest of Honour for the Pink Ribbon Virtual Launch Party. He says, “Through this year’s theme and message, we hope that the community will initiate conversations and provide a safe space for women to open up to their peers and family about their thoughts and feelings on breast cancer and screening. By having a companion, we hope that women will feel less alone and be empowered to take the first and most crucial step in making health a priority and screen themselves for breast cancer.”

Public can also join an online Pink Plank Challenge. Much like doing planking, a seemingly difficult and tiring activity, when done with a buddy, it becomes easier and in fact, more fun. This is parallel to the cancer care journey where a journey alongside a circle of support becomes less daunting. Planking also highlights the importance of exercise that may reduce one’s breast cancer risk. Studies have shown that 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise each week can reduce one’s risk of breast cancer.³ Members of the public are encouraged to participate in the Pink Plank Challenge by recording themselves completing a 20-second plank with a friend or family member and sharing the video on their social media platforms.

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² Singapore Cancer Registry Annual Report 2018

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**SINGAPORE
CANCER
SOCIETY**



**BREAST CANCER
FOUNDATION**



**Health
Promotion
Board**



**National Cancer
Centre Singapore
SingHealth**



**National University
Cancer Institute
Singapore**

A member of the NUHS



**Tan Tock Seng
HOSPITAL**
National Healthcare Group

To bring about greater public awareness, rally community support and increase giving for the cancer cause, SCS and its partners spearheaded the inaugural collaboration with the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre to widen outreach and fundraising efforts through Singapore's one-stop online giving portal, Giving.sg. We encourage the public who are interested in donating to breast cancer related causes to visit www.giving.sg/breast-cancer-awareness.

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¹ National Population Health Survey 2019 Report, Ministry of Health and Health Promotion Board Singapore. .

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Appendix A: Story of a Breast Cancer Survivor



Mdm Patsy Cheong, 64, was diagnosed with stage 2a breast cancer 11 years ago and is currently in remission. She was encouraged by her elder sister, who had gone through a mammogram, to go for screening.

“In my early 40s to 50s, having a mammogram never crossed my mind because I always felt that I was healthy and there was no need to waste time on screening. Since I was in the high-risk age group my sister convinced me to go for a mammogram,” explained Patsy.

After her mammogram she was informed by the polyclinic that there was an abnormality. She was then referred to a hospital for a consultation and biopsy. “My sister followed me when I went for my review of the biopsy. I am glad she did as I was feeling very confused and frightened when I got my diagnosis. I had to go through day surgery to remove the lump. Following that I had 6 rounds of chemotherapy and more than 20 rounds of radiation treatment. Throughout the entire journey my family was with me, supporting me all the way,” said Patsy.

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The side effect of chemotherapy kicked in after the 4th session and she started feeling lethargic and restless. But that did not stop her from keeping up with her day-to-day activities. As a mother of 4, she managed to juggle her part time job while caring for her children.

Now she advocates early screening and encourages other women to go for mammogram. She said, “My personal experience is that a mammogram is not that painful, and it is a very fast process. Although I am in remission I still go for my mammograms. I think it is helpful and supportive if family members and friends can nudge each other to go for mammograms.”

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Appendix B: BCAM 2021 Calendar of Events

Breast Cancer Awareness Webinar

16 October 2021, English Session: 10.30am to 12pm, Mandarin Session: 2.30pm to 4pm

Learn from our experts about the signs, symptoms and treatment options for breast cancer and what you do to detect it early.

Find out more at: <https://bit.ly/scsbcam2021>

Events & Activities on Breast Cancer

- **Pink Plank Challenge – Whole month of October**

Organisers: Singapore Cancer Society, Breast Cancer Foundation, Health Promotion Board, National Cancer Centre Singapore, National University Cancer Institute, Singapore and Tan Tock Seng Hospital

During the month of October, the public can participate in the Pink Plank Challenge by recording a video of themselves completing a 20-second plank with a friend or family member and posting the video on Facebook. This movement aims to raise awareness on breast cancer, and that exercise can help reduce breast cancer risk. More details about the Pink Plank Challenge can be found at <http://bit.ly/SCSbcam2021> or on the organisers' Facebook pages.

- **Get Fit In Pink Online Fitness Classes – Every Monday & Wednesday in October**

Organiser: National Cancer Centre Singapore

In line with our theme “Buddy Up to Beat Breast Cancer”, participants can invite their friends to sign up for free virtual fitness classes together and encourage each other to keep up an active lifestyle. Yoga classes will be conducted every Monday and Fight-Do classes every Wednesday.

- **Yoga In Pink! – A Hatha Yoga Beginner Class on 14, 21 & 28 October**

Organiser: National University Cancer Institute, Singapore

Breast cancer is the number 1 cancer affecting women in Singapore. It is important

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for you keep fit and stay healthy through exercise. Buddy up with your BFF and join our Yoga instructor for an hour of fitness! Remember to put on your pink sportswear and assemble your pink sports gear!

- **BCAM Fundraising Campaign on Giving.sg – Whole month of October**

Organisers: Singapore Cancer Society, Breast Cancer Foundation, National Cancer Centre Singapore, National University Cancer Institute, Singapore and Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Visit www.giving.sg/breast-cancer-awareness to learn more about the various causes and fundraising initiatives that raise awareness on breast cancer screening and support Breast Cancer Research.

Public Webinars

- Busting Breast Cancer – 2 & 9 October, 10am to 11am
A conversation about your top 12 questions.
- Fight Cancer! – 9 Oct, 10am to 11am
Learn about the signs and symptoms, risk factors, prevention and treatment of breast cancer.
- Breast Cancer Awareness Webinar – 16 Oct, 10.30am – 12pm (English) and 2.30pm to 4pm (Mandarin)
Learn from our experts about the signs, symptoms and treatment options for breast cancer and what you do to detect it early.
- Breast Health & You – 16 Oct, 9am to 10.15am (English) and 11am to 12.15pm (Chinese)
- Life After Breast Cancer – 23 Oct, 10am to 11.15am
Find out how you could conquer breast cancer and care for yourself after your breast cancer treatment.
- Conquer Breast Cancer with 3 Simple Steps – 30 Oct, 9am to 12pm
Mammogram, monthly Breast Self-Examination and good lifestyle habits.

Visit <https://linktr.ee/BCAM2021> for more information and to register for any of the events and activities listed above.

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Appendix C: Screening programmes for women in Singapore

Screen for Life

Regular mammogram screening is the best defence against breast cancer, as detecting breast cancer early can lead to increased chances of survival due to better treatment outcomes. The HPB recommends women aged 50 years and above to go for mammogram screening once every two years.

Through HPB's national screening programme – Screen for Life, women aged 50 years and above can enjoy subsidised mammogram screenings at participating breast screening centres. The screening test will cost \$50 (for eligible Singapore Citizens) and \$75 (Permanent Residents) after prevailing government subsidies. For more information on Screen for Life, please visit: https://www.healthhub.sg/programmes/61/Screen_for_Life.

Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) \$25 Funding Assistance for Mammogram Screening

In the month of October and November, women who are eligible can receive a funding assistance of \$25 from SCS for their mammogram screening.

Women who have their mammograms done at HPB's Screen for Life breast screening centres (polyclinic) will expect to pay \$25 (for Singapore Citizens) and \$50 (for Permanent Residents), after prevailing government subsidies and SCS' funding assistance. For mammogram screenings done at participating private breast screening centres, SCS will further defray the screening cost by \$25.

To qualify for funding assistance, appointments must be made at participating breast screening centres by 15th November 2021, and the mammogram screening must be done by 30th November 2021. Funding assistance eligibility and a full listing of the clinics can be found at <http://bit.ly/scsbcam2021>. Women aged between 40 and 49 years can screen for breast cancer, but they should talk to their doctor about the benefits and limitations of mammograms screening before doing so, to help them make an informed choice.

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National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS) Additional Funding Assistance for First Mammogram Screening

In the month of October and November, NCIS will be providing an additional funding assistance of \$10 on top of prevailing funding assistance/subsidies to women who will be going for their mammograms for the first time under the HPB Screen for Life Programme*.

The NCIS Funding Assistance will be offered at selected National University Polyclinics (NUP). They are:

1. Clementi Polyclinic
2. Bukit Batok Polyclinic
3. Jurong Polyclinic
4. Pioneer Polyclinic
5. Chua Chu Kang Polyclinic

Visit www.ncis.com.sg/BCAM2021 for more information on the eligibility criteria and registration details.

National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS) Breast Screening on Mammogram Bus

NCIS's mammobus screening will be held at Jurong Medical Centre on 30th October and 6th November 2021. Slots are limited. Strictly by appointment only.

For appointment, please call 6773 7888 or email: cancerscreening@nuhs.edu.sg

*Terms and Conditions apply.

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About Singapore Cancer Society

Established in 1964, Singapore Cancer Society is a self-funded voluntary welfare organisation which provides patient care services to needy cancer patients through its welfare, hospice home care, cancer treatment subsidy and rehabilitation support programmes. In addition, the Society also provides free cancer screening services and promotes cancer awareness and prevention through its public education and community outreach programmes.

www.singaporecancersociety.org.sg

About Breast Cancer Foundation

Breast Cancer Foundation (BCF) is a social service agency with the mission to eradicate breast cancer as a life-threatening disease. Set up in 1997, BCF is committed to raising awareness about breast cancer through talks, events and publications that advocate early detection through regular screening, as well as supporting survivors and their families through various befriending and training activities. As one of the few advocacy groups in the world with a Men's Support League that was integrated with Caregiver Support Group in year 2017, BCF aims to encourage greater male participation in society's fight against this affliction. For more information, visit www.bcf.org.sg or follow BCF on Facebook and Instagram.

About Health Promotion Board

The Health Promotion Board (HPB) was established as a statutory board under the Ministry of Health, Singapore, in 2001 with the vision of building "A Nation of Healthy People". HPB aims to empower Singaporeans to attain optimal health, increase the quality and years of healthy life and prevent illness, disability and premature death. As the key agency overseeing national health promotion and disease prevention programmes, HPB spearheads health education, promotion and prevention programmes as well as creates a health-supportive environment in Singapore. It develops and organises health promotion and disease prevention programmes, reaching out to the healthy, the at-risk and the unhealthy at all stages of life – children, youths, adults and older Singapore residents. Its health promotion initiatives cover nutrition, physical activity, mental well-being, health screening, tobacco control and communicable disease education. More information can be found at www.hpb.gov.sg.

About National Cancer Centre Singapore

National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) provides a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to cancer treatment and patient care. We see close to 65 per cent of the public sector oncology cases, and they are benefiting from the sub-specialisation of our clinical oncologists. To deliver among the best in cancer treatment and care, our clinicians work closely with our scientists who conduct robust cutting-edge clinical and translational research programmes which are internationally recognised. NCCS strives to be a leading global cancer centre, and shares its expertise and knowledge by offering training to local and overseas medical professionals. For more information, please visit: www.nccs.com.sg

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About the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore

The National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS) offers a broad spectrum of cancer care and management covering both paediatric and adult cancers, with expertise in prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care. The Institute's strength lies in the multi-disciplinary approach taken to develop a comprehensive and personalised plan for each cancer patient and his or her family. Our award-winning clinician-scientists and clinician-investigators conduct translational research and clinical trials, providing patients with access to evidence-based cancer diagnostics, technology and therapies. For more information about NCIS, please visit www.ncis.com.sg.

About Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) is the flagship hospital of the National Healthcare Group and part of Singapore's Public Healthcare System. As a pioneering hospital with strong roots in the community for over 177 years, TTSH is recognised as the People's Hospital, serving a resident population of 1.4 Million living in Central Singapore.

Together, with 75 community partners and 80 community health posts, it brings care beyond the hospital into the community as an integrated care organisation – Central Health.

As one of the largest multi-disciplinary hospitals in Singapore, TTSH operates more than 1700 beds with centres of excellence including the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID), Institute for Geriatrics & Active Ageing (IGA), NHG Eye Institute (NHGEI), TTSH Rehabilitation Centre, and Ang Mo Kio Specialist Centre (AMKSC).

TTSH's 600-bed Integrated Care Hub will be ready in 2023 to provide for subacute care and rehabilitation. As a healthcare leader in population health, systems innovation, health technologies and workforce transformation, TTSH hosts Singapore's largest purpose-built innovation centre for healthcare - the Ng Teng Fong Centre for Healthcare Innovation (CHI) and its Co-Learning Network of 37 local and international partners.

For more information, please visit www.ttsh.com.sg.

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