



# WEEKLY EPIDEMIOLOGICAL REPORT

A publication of the Epidemiology Unit  
Ministry of Health

231, de Saram Place, Colombo 01000, Sri Lanka  
Tele: + 94 11 2695112, Fax: +94 11 2696583, E mail: epidunit@slt.net.lk  
Epidemiologist: +94 11 2681548, E mail: chepid@slt.net.lk  
Web: <http://www.epid.gov.lk>

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## Breast Cancer (Part I)

This is the first in a series of four articles on Breast cancer

spread beyond the original tumor to other parts of the body.

### What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer is an uncontrolled growth of breast cells. To understand breast cancer better, it helps to understand how any cancer can develop.

**The term “breast cancer” refers to a malignant tumor that has developed from cells in the breast.** Usually breast cancer either begins in the cells of the lobules, which are the milk-producing glands, or the ducts, the passages that drain milk from the lobules to the nipple. Less commonly, breast cancer can begin in the stromal tissues, which include the fatty and fibrous connective tissues of the breast.

Cancer occurs as a result of mutations, or abnormal changes, in the genes responsible for regulating the growth of cells and keeping them healthy. The genes are in each cell’s nucleus, which acts as the “control room” of each cell. Normally, the cells in our bodies replace themselves through an orderly process of cell growth: healthy new cells take over as old ones die out. But over time, mutations can “turn on” certain genes and “turn off” others in a cell. That changed cell gains the ability to keep dividing without control or order, producing more cells just like it and forming a tumor.

Over time, cancer cells can invade nearby healthy breast tissue and make their way into the underarm lymph nodes, small organs that filter out foreign substances in the body. If cancer cells get into the lymph nodes, they then have a pathway into other parts of the body. The breast cancer’s stage refers to how far the cancer cells have spread beyond the original tumor.

A tumor can be benign (not dangerous to health) or malignant (has the potential to be dangerous). Benign tumors are not considered cancerous: their cells are close to normal in appearance, they grow slowly, and they do not invade nearby tissues or spread to other parts of the body. Malignant tumors are cancerous. Left unchecked, malignant cells eventually can

Breast cancer is always caused by a genetic abnormality (a “mistake” in the genetic material). However, only 5-10% of cancers are due to an abnormality inherited from your mother or father. Instead, 85-90% of breast cancers are due to genetic abnormalities that happen as a result of the ageing process and the “wear and tear” of life in general.

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There are steps every person can take to help the body stay as healthy as possible, such as eating a balanced diet, maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, limiting alcohol, and exercising regularly. While these may have some impact on your risk of getting breast cancer, they cannot eliminate the risk.

Developing breast cancer is not your or anyone's fault. Feeling guilty, or telling yourself that breast cancer happened because of something you or anyone else did, is not productive.

**What are the key statistics about breast cancer?**

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women, except for skin cancers. About 1 in 8 (12%) women in the US will develop invasive breast cancer during their lifetime.

The American Cancer Society's estimates for breast cancer in the United States for 2014 are:

- About 232,670 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women.
- About 62,570 new cases of carcinoma in situ (CIS) will be diagnosed (CIS is non-invasive and is the earliest form of breast cancer).
- About 40,000 women will die from breast cancer

After increasing for more than 2 decades, female breast cancer incidence rates began decreasing in 2000, then dropped by about 7% from 2002 to 2003. This large decrease was thought to be due to the decline in use of hormone therapy after menopause that occurred after the results of the Women's Health Initiative were published in 2002. This study linked the use of hormone therapy to an increased risk of breast cancer and heart diseases. Incidence rates have been stable in recent years.

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in women, exceeded only by lung cancer. The chance that breast cancer will be responsible for a woman's death is about 1 in 36 (about 3%). Death rates from breast cancer have been declining since about 1989, with larger decreases in women younger than 50. These decreases are believed to be the result of earlier detection through screening and increased

awareness, as well as improved treatment.

At this time there are more than 2.8 million breast cancer survivors in the United States. (This includes women still being treated and those who have completed treatment).

Even though the exact statistics are not found regarding Sri Lanka, breast cancer is one of the commonest cancers found among Sri Lankan women.

**What Are the Symptoms of Breast Cancer?**

Different people have different warning signs for breast cancer. Some people do not have any signs or symptoms at all. A person may find out they have breast cancer after a routine mammogram.

Some warning signs of breast cancer are—

- New lump in the breast or underarm (armpit).
- Thickening or swelling of part of the breast.
- Irritation or dimpling of breast skin.
- Redness or flaky skin in the nipple area or the breast.
- Pulling in of the nipple or pain in the nipple area.
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood.
- Any change in the size or the shape of the breast.
- Pain in any area of the breast.

Keep in mind that some of these warning signs can happen with other conditions that are not cancer.

**If you have any signs that worry you, be sure to see your doctor right away.**

**Sources**

Breast Cancer-available at [http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/ov/breast/basic\\_info/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/ov/breast/basic_info/index.htm)

Breast Cancer-available at <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/breastcancer/detailedguide/breast-cancer-key-statistics>

**Compiled by Dr. C U D Gunasekara of the Epidemiology Unit**

Table 1: Selected notifiable diseases reported by Medical Officers of Health 18<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> Oct 2014 (43<sup>rd</sup> Week)

RDHS Division	Dengue Fever		Dysentery		Encephalitis		Enteric Fever		Food Poisoning		Leptospirosis		Typhus Fever		Viral Hepatitis		Human Rabies		Chickenpox		Meningitis		Leishmaniasis		WRCD		
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	T*	C**	
Colombo	211	11303	6	126	2	13	2	98	0	211	11	149	0	3	1	45	0	0	0	0	354	0	51	0	3	81	19
Gampaha	119	6217	0	126	0	11	0	32	4	28	17	311	1	21	6	230	0	5	2	252	1	60	0	2	60	40	
Kalutara	32	2220	0	142	0	11	0	46	0	59	8	271	0	3	0	20	0	1	3	216	0	64	0	0	92	8	
Kandy	68	1476	0	80	1	7	0	21	2	20	3	45	2	76	8	174	0	1	2	167	0	26	0	5	96	4	
Matale	20	414	0	59	0	2	0	18	0	17	3	36	1	3	1	130	0	1	0	48	0	45	0	27	85	15	
NuwaraEliya	6	252	7	233	0	3	0	18	0	69	0	23	0	55	1	32	0	0	6	116	4	35	0	0	85	15	
Galle	25	935	2	109	0	6	0	8	0	33	13	172	4	89	1	10	0	0	4	372	0	50	0	3	90	10	
Hambantota	18	557	0	44	0	4	0	11	0	16	1	78	1	66	1	17	0	0	5	134	0	40	1	310	92	8	
Matarata	19	576	0	88	0	4	0	23	0	19	3	84	4	57	1	37	0	0	4	1641	1	31	0	75	100	0	
Jaffna	33	1032	60	585	0	7	14	215	1	61	1	9	2	276	3	12	0	0	1	122	0	52	0	1	100	0	
Kilinochchi	0	47	3	93	0	3	0	23	0	0	0	1	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	6	0	11	25	75	
Mannar	12	140	1	38	0	10	0	34	0	9	0	4	0	24	0	1	0	0	0	10	0	7	0	4	60	40	
Vavuniya	0	108	7	60	0	1	2	39	0	22	0	9	0	6	0	5	0	0	0	12	0	15	0	5	50	50	
Mullaitivu	0	87	2	55	0	0	1	13	5	25	0	8	0	11	0	0	0	2	0	5	0	5	0	7	80	20	
Batticaloa	3	683	4	273	0	3	0	34	0	30	0	16	0	2	0	7	0	1	2	56	0	6	0	0	64	36	
Ampara	2	134	2	66	0	1	0	3	1	11	2	17	0	12	0	5	0	1	4	98	0	9	0	10	86	14	
Trincomalee	1	515	2	47	0	1	0	5	1	11	0	16	0	21	0	2	0	0	1	95	0	14	0	8	50	50	
Kurunegala	67	1829	4	124	0	26	0	18	1	28	3	92	0	43	3	56	0	1	2	358	0	66	5	125	96	4	
Puttalam	14	579	0	62	0	2	0	13	0	11	1	59	1	23	2	6	0	3	0	75	1	26	0	6	77	23	
Anuradhapura	8	451	9	159	0	5	0	3	1	47	0	82	0	27	1	13	0	0	0	202	1	46	4	364	63	37	
Polonnaruwa	2	447	1	41	0	4	1	7	0	1	0	58	0	8	0	8	0	0	2	140	0	25	0	112	57	43	
Badulla	29	626	9	160	0	9	0	12	0	11	0	48	3	101	3	131	0	0	1	70	2	115	0	0	82	18	
Monaragala	2	242	3	62	0	4	0	8	0	33	1	68	1	146	1	112	0	2	0	77	0	21	2	29	82	18	
Ratnapura	21	2556	6	201	0	23	0	26	0	34	7	344	1	97	8	397	0	1	0	171	1	41	5	33	78	22	
Kegalle	19	1390	0	96	0	10	1	46	0	34	18	182	1	54	1	221	0	0	5	229	0	68	0	2	82	18	
Kalmune	0	147	0	110	0	1	0	6	0	74	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	89	0	8	0	0	8	92	
<b>SRILANKA</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>34963</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>3239</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>914</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>2184</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1244</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>1671</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>3647</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>932</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1142</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>22</b>	

Source: Weekly Returns of Communicable Diseases (WRCD).

\*T=Timeliness refers to returns received on or before 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2014. Total number of reporting units 337. Number of reporting units data provided for the current week: 266. C\*\*=Completeness

Table 2: Vaccine-Preventable Diseases & AFP

18<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> Oct 2014 (43<sup>rd</sup> Week)

Disease	No. of Cases by Province									Number of cases during current week in 2014	Number of cases during same week in 2013	Total number of cases to date in 2014	Total number of cases to date in 2013	Difference between the number of cases to date in 2013 & 2014
	W	C	S	N	E	NW	NC	U	Sab					
AFP*	00	01	02	00	00	00	00	00	00	03	04	70	81	-13.6%
Diphtheria	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	-	00	-	%
Mumps	03	00	05	00	01	01	00	01	01	12	29	582	1316	-55.8%
Measles	06	01	03	00	01	02	01	00	04	18	98	2850	3352	-15.1%
Rubella	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	17	26	-34.6%
CRS**	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	04	06	-33.3%
Tetanus	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	12	19	-36.9%
Neonatal Tetanus	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	
Japanese Encephalitis	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	22	68	-67.6%
Whooping Cough	01	00	02	00	00	00	00	00	00	03	01	64	73	-12.4%
Tuberculosis	39	07	15	14	13	00	07	00	05	100	283	8062	6900	+16.9%

**Key to Table 1 & 2**

Provinces: W: Western, C: Central, S: Southern, N: North, E: East, NC: North Central, NW: North Western, U: Uva, Sab: Sabaragamuwa.  
 RDHS Divisions: CB: Colombo, GM: Gampaha, KL: Kalutara, KD: Kandy, ML: Matale, NE: Nuwara Eliya, GL: Galle, HB: Hambantota, MT: Matara, JF: Jaffna, KN: Killinochchi, MN: Mannar, VA: Vavuniya, MU: Mullaitivu, BT: Batticaloa, AM: Ampara, TR: Trincomalee, KM: Kalmunai, KR: Kurunegala, PU: Puttalam, AP: Anuradhapura, PO: Polonnaruwa, BD: Badulla, MO: Moneragala, RP: Ratnapura, KG: Kegalle.

Data Sources: Weekly Return of Communicable Diseases: Diphtheria, Measles, Tetanus, Neonatal Tetanus, Whooping Cough, Chickenpox, Meningitis, Mumps., Rubella, CRS, Special Surveillance: AFP\* (Acute Flaccid Paralysis), Japanese Encephalitis  
 CRS\*\* =Congenital Rubella Syndrome  
 AFP and all clinically confirmed Vaccine Preventable Diseases except Tuberculosis and Mumps should be investigated by the MOH

**Dengue Prevention and Control Health Messages**

**Look for plants such as bamboo, bohemia, rampe and banana in your surroundings and maintain them**

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**ON STATE SERVICE**

**Dr. P. PALIHAWADANA**  
 CHIEF EPIDEMIOLOGIST  
 EPIDEMIOLOGY UNIT  
 231, DE SARAM PLACE  
 COLOMBO 10