Turning Awareness Into Action: American Cancer Society Recognizes 40 Years of Breast Cancer Awareness Month

ATLANTA, October 1, 2025 — This October, the American Cancer Society (ACS) commemorates the 40th anniversary of the founding of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. In 1985, ACS co-led the effort to start Breast Cancer Awareness Month as a week-long campaign to educate women about the importance of early screening and routine mammograms for breast cancer detection and treatment. In 2025, more than 316,000 women are expected to be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer in the United States, making the efforts of the awareness month increasingly important.

According to the ACS's Cancer Facts & Figures 2025 report, approximately 1 in 8 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer during their lifetime, and 1 in 43 will die from the disease. However, there has been tremendous progress; ACS researchers project that by 2035, the number of breast cancer survivors will reach 5.3 million. Today, ACS encourages everyone to turn awareness into action in the continued mission of ending breast cancer as we know it. To combat the disease and support both individuals and their families going through a diagnosis, ACS funds research that advances prevention and treatment efforts, advocates for equitable access to care, and provides programs, services, and science-based cancer information, helping to ensure that no one faces breast cancer—or any cancer—alone.

"As we look back at 40 years of breast cancer awareness, the number 40 is significant. Breast cancer mortality is down more than 40% and 40 is when women should start having a conversation with their doctor about getting a mammogram," said Dr. Arif Kamal, chief patient officer at the American Cancer Society. "ACS is proud to have played a significant role in the advancement of breast cancer research and the development of innovative patient support tools."

For the past four decades, ACS researchers and scientists have been an integral part of breast cancer therapy breakthroughs:

1980s-1990s
BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes are discovered, and the FDA approves the drug Herceptin

2000s
Breast cancer stem cells are identified

2010s
Triple-negative breast cancer immunotherapy approved

2020s
mRNA-based breast cancer vaccines show promise, and liquid biopsies projected to expand

Despite these breakthroughs and advances in early detection and treatment, alarming disparities remain for Asian American, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Black women. In 2024, ACS launched the VOICES of Black Women study to address these ongoing cancer disparities and to better understand cancer risk and outcomes.

"Due in part to the work of the American Cancer Society, 3 in 4 women are now up to date on screening, which is the greatest reason mortality has reduced," said Kamal. "But 1 in 4 are not up to date, and we need to close that gap. That's why this October, we're encouraging everyone to do more than wear pink, to go beyond ribbons and awareness, to take action. Because every action counts."

Learn more and ways to take action at www.cancer.org/BreastCancerAction.

Additional ACS Resources:

- Breast Cancer Information & Resources
- Breast Cancer Facts and Figures
- ACS Recommendations for the Early Detection of Breast Cancer (Screening Guidelines)
- Cancer treatment and survivorship statistics, 2025
- CancerRisk360

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About the American Cancer Society
The American Cancer Society is a leading cancer-fighting organization with a vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. For more than 110 years, we have been improving the lives of people with cancer and their families as the only organization combating cancer through advocacy, research, and patient support. We are committed to ensuring everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. To learn more, visit cancer.org or call our 24/7 helpline at 1-800-227-2345. Connect with us on Facebook, X, and Instagram.

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