

# Health Pulse magazine



**Pink Power:**  
How Ghanaian Survivors  
Are Redefining Life After  
Breast Cancer  
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**Birth Control Pills and Cancer: Myth, Misconception, or Medical Fact?**  
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## HCOWAA: Advancing Healthcare Standards in West Africa

The Health Community of West Africa Association (HCOWAA), based in Ghana, is a non-governmental organization dedicated to advancing healthcare across West Africa. Addressing the uneven distribution of medical resources, HCOWAA advocates for regional cooperation through a Health Alliance that unites healthcare stakeholders to create a cohesive health community.

With a mission to improve health outcomes in West Africa, HCOWAA facilitates collaboration, innovation, and research among professionals, leveraging collective resources to enhance healthcare services, policies, and access. HCOWA envisions a resilient West African healthcare system where institutions and professionals lead groundbreaking research, foster innovation, and influence policies that elevate regional healthcare.

Through initiatives like establishing a regional healthcare database, launching research projects, and hosting policy roundtables, HCOWA builds strong networks to drive healthcare advancements. Advocacy efforts focus on equitable access, supporting vulnerable populations, and addressing healthcare disparities. The organization's objectives include fostering research and innovation, supporting health policy reforms, and integrating medical equipment manufacturers with healthcare facilities.

HCOWA also facilitates training programs, academic exchanges, and research grants, ensuring members are equipped with knowledge and skills to address regional health challenges effectively. Networking events like the HCOWA Medical and Health Industry Investment Summit & Expo connect professionals, offering a platform for partnership and knowledge sharing.

HCOWAA's commitment extends to partnerships with international health organizations and academic institutions, which amplify its impact by introducing global best practices and strengthening West African healthcare infrastructure. Collaborative efforts with international partners promote training, research, and infrastructure upgrades for health facilities, pharmaceutical establishments, and clinics.

In addition, HCOWAA's magazine partnerships, including an MoU with Health Pulse Magazine, provide platforms to publish relevant content, share insights, and enhance visibility for ongoing initiatives. Through these combined efforts, HCOWAA aims to foster a collaborative healthcare environment that not only addresses urgent health challenges but also builds a sustainable, inclusive healthcare future for West Africa.

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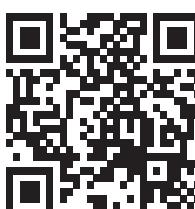
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# MEN GET BREAST CANCER TOO!

..... And It's Time We Talk About It.

If you think breast cancer is only a woman's disease, it's time to think again. Men get breast cancer too. Yet because it's so rarely discussed, their diagnosis often comes too late. Yes, male breast cancer is uncommon less than one percent of all cases, but when it strikes, it hits hard, often catching both patients and clinicians by surprise.

Too many men dismiss the early signs: a lump beneath the nipple, changes in skin texture, or unexplained discharge. They assume it's nothing serious. Sometimes, even doctors do too. But that silence — that hesitation — can be deadly.

At HCOWA, we believe the conversation around breast cancer must expand beyond gender.

Awareness and screening should be inclusive, informed, and proactive. Because breast cancer doesn't choose its victims based on gender — and neither should our vigilance.

Our AI-enhanced breast imaging program is built on that very truth: that early detection saves lives. By integrating artificial intelligence into diagnostics, we are identifying abnormalities faster and more accurately — for all patients.

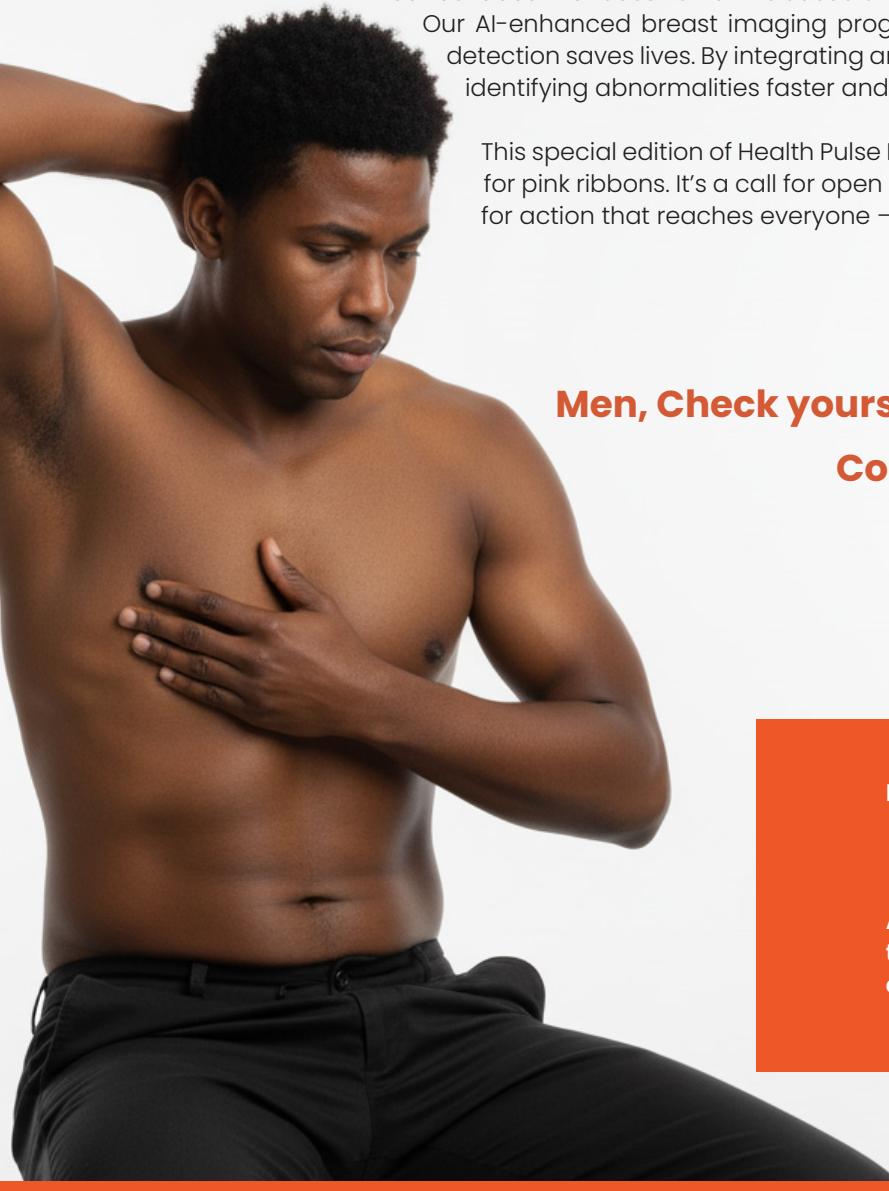
This special edition of Health Pulse Health Magazine is more than a campaign for pink ribbons. It's a call for open conversation, for inclusive awareness, and for action that reaches everyone — women and men alike.

**So, to every reader:  
Men, Check yourself. Clinicians, stay alert,  
Communities, keep talking.**

Because awareness isn't just power

**IT'S SURVIVAL.**

At HCOWA, we're using AI and advocacy  
to make that survival story possible for  
everyone



When we think of vital organs, the heart, brain, and lungs usually come to mind first. Yet, quietly nestled under the rib cage on the upper left side of the abdomen lies an unsung hero, the spleen. Though often overlooked, this small organ plays a powerful role in keeping the body healthy and balanced.

### What Is the Spleen?

The spleen is part of both the circulatory and immune systems, acting as a sophisticated filter for the blood. Roughly the size of a fist, it constantly monitors and manages what flows through our bloodstream. Key Functions of the Spleen

#### 1. Blood Filtration:

Every minute, blood passes through the spleen, where old or damaged red blood cells are removed. The useful components, such as iron, are recycled to make new red blood cells.

#### 2. Immune Defense:

The spleen detects harmful bacteria, viruses, and other pathogens in the blood. It then triggers the release of white blood cells, especially lymphocytes, to fight infection and strengthen immunity.

#### 3. Blood Storage:

Acting like a reserve tank, the spleen stores extra blood, including platelets and white blood cells, which can be released in times of injury or emergency.

### When Things Go Wrong

A healthy spleen works quietly in the background, but when it becomes enlarged — a condition known as splenomegaly, it may signal an infection, liver disease, or blood disorder. People who have their spleen removed (a splenectomy) can still live normal lives, but they become more vulnerable to certain infections and need extra preventive care, such as vaccinations.

### Protecting Your Spleen

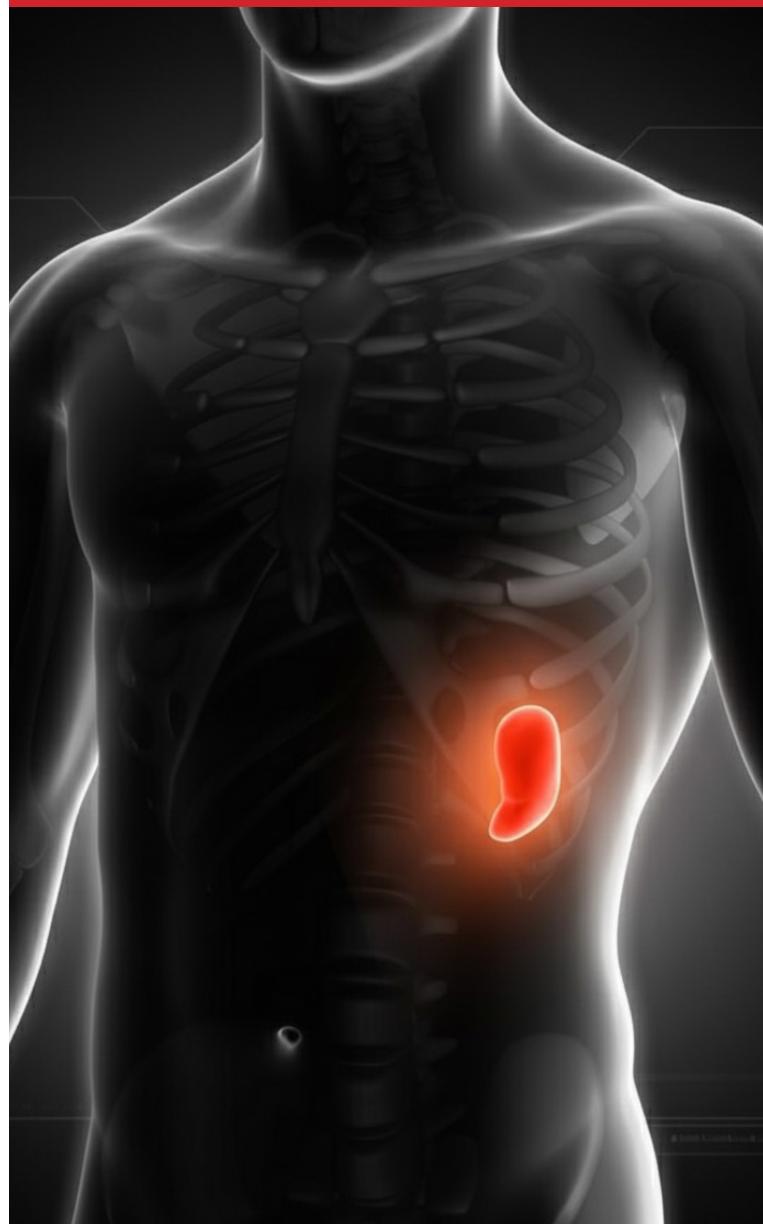
While the spleen doesn't demand special attention, maintaining overall health helps it function well. Eating a balanced diet, staying hydrated, exercising regularly, and managing infections promptly all support spleen health.

### A Small Organ with a Big Job

The spleen may not get much attention, but its contribution to blood health and immunity is invaluable. It reminds us that even the quietest organs in the body play essential roles in keeping us alive and well.

# The Spleen

By Richeal Elikem Dovia



# HCOWA and Greenfield School of Medicine Partner to Boost Reproductive Health and Fertility Education in West Africa

In a groundbreaking step toward improving reproductive health and fertility care across West Africa, The Health Community of West Africa (HCOWA) has entered a strategic partnership with the Greenfield School of Medicine, a tertiary institution based in Sunyani in the Bono Region of Ghana.

The collaboration, detailed in an official proposal, aims to establish a Reproductive Health and Fertility Training and Service Program that will address infertility challenges, enhance maternal health, and build the capacity of healthcare professionals through specialized education, research, and clinical innovation.

HCOWA, headquartered in Accra, is a regional health organization dedicated to advancing medical development and training across West Africa. Greenfield School of Medicine, accredited by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) and recognized by the Registrar General's Department, is committed to providing high-quality medical education and practical training for improved healthcare delivery.

## Empowering Medical Professionals and Communities

The new partnership will focus on several key areas, including assisted reproductive technologies (ART) such as In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF), diagnosis and treatment of infertility, maternal care, and community education on reproductive wellness. The program will also provide short courses, workshops, and certification programs designed to equip doctors, nurses, and midwives with modern reproductive science and fertility management skills.

Beyond clinical training, the collaboration will emphasize research and innovation, establishing a Reproductive Health Research Unit within Greenfield School of Medicine. This unit will conduct studies on infertility, genetic factors affecting conception, and explore the integration of traditional and modern medical practices. Additionally, there will be academic exchanges with Chinese medical experts and other international specialists to foster global knowledge sharing.

## Shared Vision for Health Transformation

The joint initiative seeks to:

- Reduce infertility rates and promote healthy family planning.
- Train and certify healthcare professionals in reproductive and maternal health.
- Make fertility solutions more affordable and accessible.
- Enhance research and clinical innovation in reproductive medicine.
- Improve women's health and reduce maternal and neonatal mortality.

## Sustainable Development Through Collaboration

Both institutions are committed to co-developing curricula, training modules, and certification standards, as well as mobilizing funding and resources for long-term sustainability. The program will be financed through tuition from short courses, research grants, donor partnerships, and private sector support, with HCOWA's regional network playing a vital role in expanding its reach and impact.

## A Milestone for West African Healthcare

According to the proposal, this partnership will result in a fully functional Reproductive Health and Fertility Training Program in Ghana, an increase in professional capacity, and stronger collaboration between local and international experts. The expected outcomes include improved birth outcomes, greater awareness of reproductive wellness, and enhanced family health standards across the sub-region.

In conclusion, the collaboration between HCOWA and the Greenfield School of Medicine represents a transformative move toward creating a healthier, more informed society. By combining education, innovation, and compassionate care, the two institutions are set to bring new hope to families facing infertility challenges and advance reproductive health standards throughout West Africa.





# From Cycle Stress to Mental Strain:

The Emotional Impact of Menstrual Disorders

By Richeal Elikem Dovia

Menstruation is a natural and essential part of a woman's reproductive health, yet for many, it can bring significant discomfort and distress. From irregular periods to painful cramps and premenstrual syndrome (PMS), menstrual disorders are common concerns that affect more than just the body.

Emerging research highlights a strong psychological connection – anxiety, especially future-oriented anxiety, may play a key role in how menstrual disorders impact overall well-being.

## Understanding Menstrual Disorders

Menstrual disorders include a variety of conditions that disrupt the normal menstrual cycle, such as:

- Dysmenorrhea (painful periods)
- Menorrhagia (heavy bleeding)
- Oligomenorrhea or amenorrhea (infrequent or absent periods)
- Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD)

While not life-threatening, these disorders can significantly affect a woman's daily functioning, productivity, and emotional stability. The unpredictable nature of symptoms often leads to worry, frustration, and decreased quality of life.

## The Role of Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress, but future anxiety—persistent worry about upcoming pain or disruption—can be particularly harmful. For women dealing with menstrual irregularities, the anticipation of discomfort or social inconvenience can heighten emotional strain. This ongoing anxiety not only intensifies the perception of pain but also undermines mood, focus, and overall well-being, creating a reinforcing cycle between physical and psychological distress.

### How Anxiety Mediates the Relationship

Studies reveal that menstrual disorders and well-being are linked not just through physical symptoms, but through anxiety as a mediating factor. Women with more severe menstrual problems tend to experience higher anxiety, which in turn lowers happiness, energy, and life satisfaction. Recognizing this connection underscores the importance of addressing both body and mind in menstrual health care.

## Conclusion

Menstrual disorders are not solely physical conditions – they also shape emotional and psychological well-being. Anxiety, particularly the fear of future discomfort, bridges this connection. By managing both menstrual symptoms and mental health, women can achieve greater balance, confidence, and overall well-being.

# Ghana Launches National HPV Vaccination Campaign to Protect 2.4 million Girls

The Minister for Health, Hon. Kwabena Mintah Akandoh, has officially launched the National HPV Vaccination Campaign, marking a historic milestone in Ghana's fight against cervical cancer one of the leading causes of death among women in the country.

The five-day nationwide campaign, covering all 16 regions, aims to vaccinate 2.4 million girls aged 9 to 14 years against the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) the primary cause of cervical cancer.

Speaking at the launch, Hon. Akandoh described the initiative as "a historic step in women's health" and a key component of President John Dramani Mahama's Free Primary Health Care initiative, which emphasizes prevention and equitable access to essential healthcare.

"Each year, Ghana records nearly 3,000 new cases of cervical cancer and loses about 2,000 women. Today, we have a chance to change this story with one powerful solution, the HPV vaccine,"

— Hon. Kwabena Mintah Akandoh, Minister for Health

The Minister explained that Ghana is introducing the Gardasil 4 vaccine, approved by both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and proven safe and effective globally. The vaccine is free of charge and will be made available nationwide through schools and community outreach programs to ensure every eligible girl is reached.

Hon. Akandoh reassured parents and guardians of the vaccine's safety, emphasizing that it is not linked to any conspiracy theories. He urged all caregivers to get their daughters vaccinated, adding that Ghana's rollout builds on earlier pilot programs and will be integrated into the routine immunization schedule after the campaign.

In a welcome address delivered on behalf of the Director-General of the Ghana Health Service, Prof. Samuel Kaba Akoriyea, he highlighted the campaign's importance in ensuring equal access to life-saving healthcare.

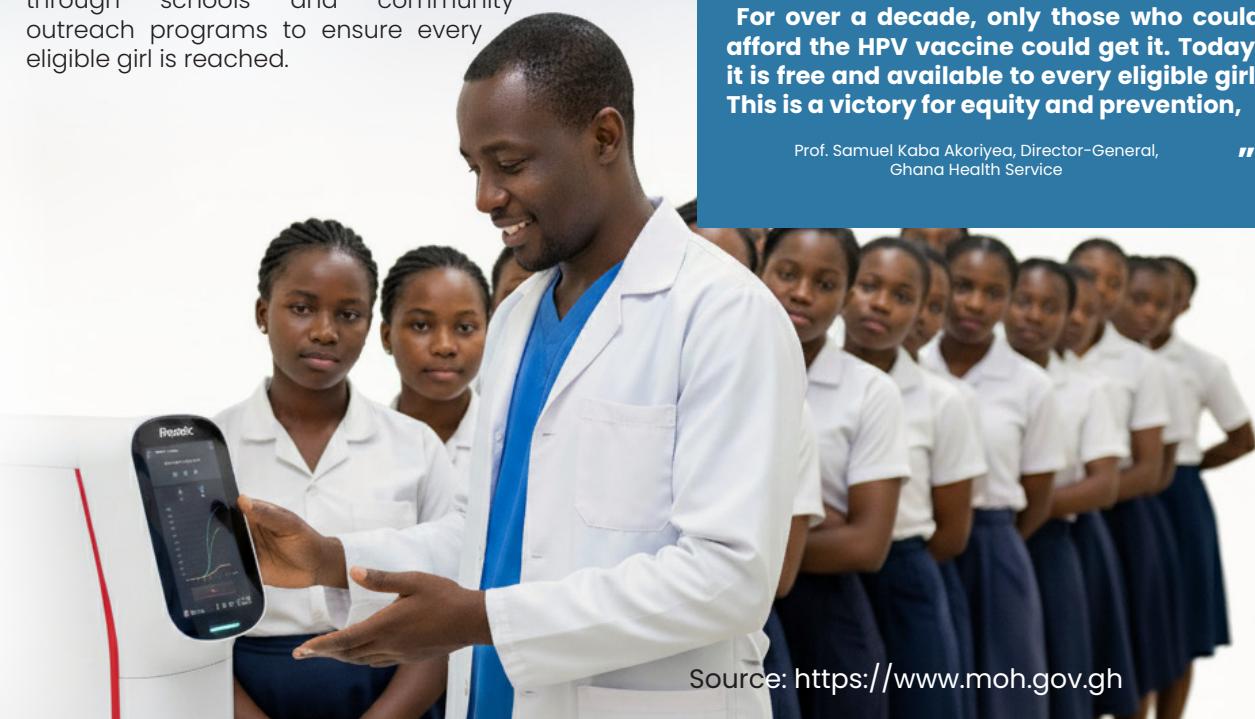
Chairing the launch, Prof. Smile Gavua Dzisi described the campaign as "a defining moment in Ghana's commitment to safeguard the health and future of girls."

The Minister expressed appreciation to development partners — including WHO, UNICEF, Gavi, USAID, CDC, PATH, health workers, and the media — for their critical support in making the initiative possible.

The campaign runs until Sunday, October 11, and the Ministry of Health urges all parents and guardians to ensure that their daughters aged 9 to 14 years receive the vaccine.

**For over a decade, only those who could afford the HPV vaccine could get it. Today, it is free and available to every eligible girl. This is a victory for equity and prevention,**

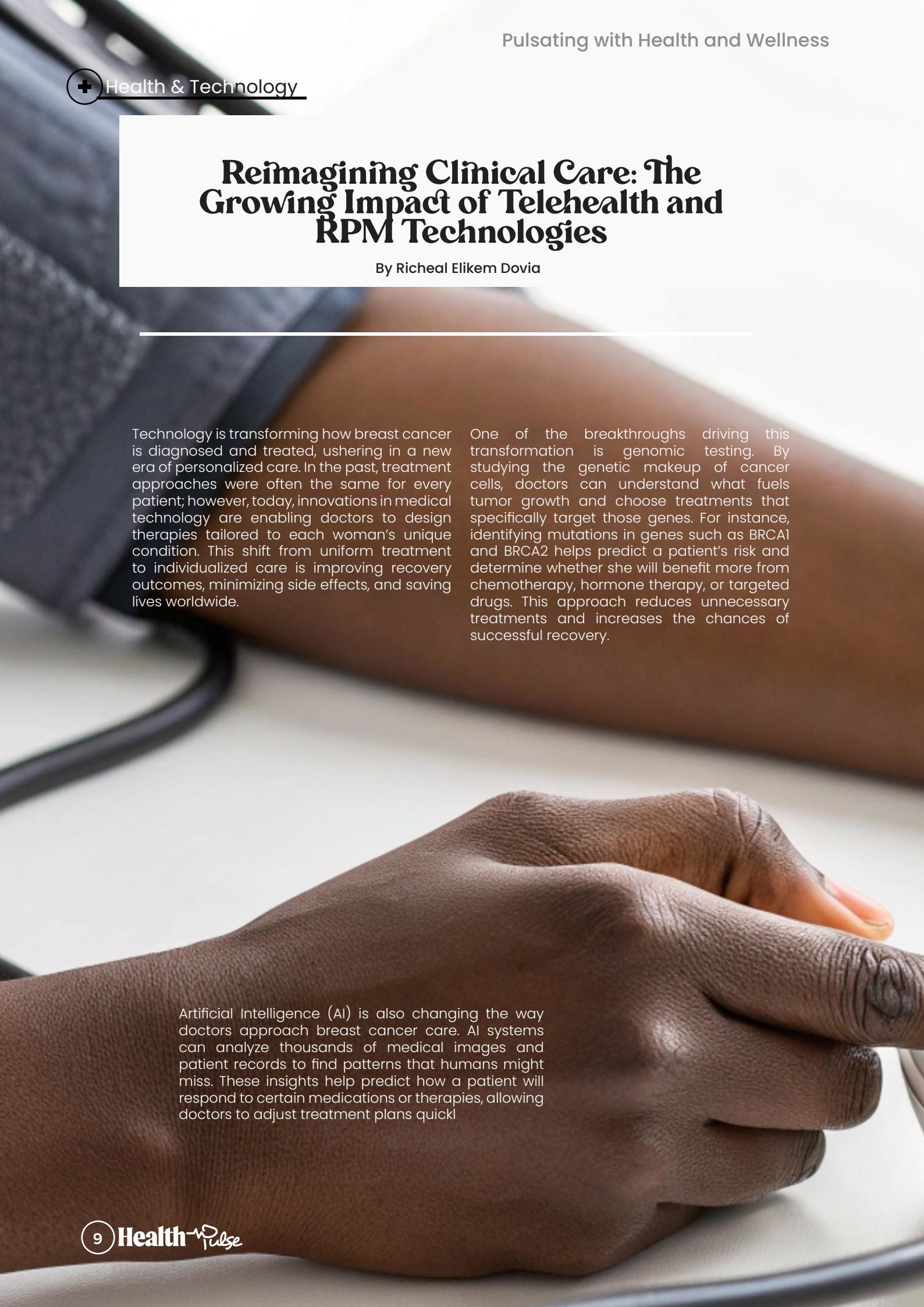
Prof. Samuel Kaba Akoriyea, Director-General,  
Ghana Health Service



Source: <https://www.moh.gov.gh>

# Reimagining Clinical Care: The Growing Impact of Telehealth and RPM Technologies

By Richeal Elikem Dovia



Technology is transforming how breast cancer is diagnosed and treated, ushering in a new era of personalized care. In the past, treatment approaches were often the same for every patient; however, today, innovations in medical technology are enabling doctors to design therapies tailored to each woman's unique condition. This shift from uniform treatment to individualized care is improving recovery outcomes, minimizing side effects, and saving lives worldwide.

One of the breakthroughs driving this transformation is genomic testing. By studying the genetic makeup of cancer cells, doctors can understand what fuels tumor growth and choose treatments that specifically target those genes. For instance, identifying mutations in genes such as BRCA1 and BRCA2 helps predict a patient's risk and determine whether she will benefit more from chemotherapy, hormone therapy, or targeted drugs. This approach reduces unnecessary treatments and increases the chances of successful recovery.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also changing the way doctors approach breast cancer care. AI systems can analyze thousands of medical images and patient records to find patterns that humans might miss. These insights help predict how a patient will respond to certain medications or therapies, allowing doctors to adjust treatment plans quickly.

and accurately. Machine learning algorithms are even being used to detect early signs of cancer on mammograms, leading to faster diagnosis and earlier intervention when treatment is most effective.

Imaging technology has also seen remarkable improvements. 3D mammography and digital breast tomosynthesis give doctors clearer and more detailed views of breast tissue, enabling surgeons to remove tumors more precisely while preserving healthy tissue. This not only reduces recovery time but also helps women heal both physically and emotionally after surgery.

In Ghana and other developing countries, telemedicine is bridging the gap between

patients and specialists. Women can now consult oncologists through digital platforms, receive expert guidance, and even be monitored remotely throughout their treatment journey. This accessibility ensures that location no longer determines the quality of care a woman receives.

Technology is no longer just an aid in breast cancer treatment; it is a partner. Through the power of genetics, AI, and digital care, doctors can now offer treatments as unique as the women they serve. The future of breast cancer care is personal, precise, and powered by technology, giving hope to millions of women worldwide.





# Cholera Outbreak Declining in Congo: A Triumph of Rapid Response and Community Action

Congo is seeing a steady decline in its cholera outbreak, marking a hopeful turning point in the country's public health response, with no confirmed cases reported between 15 and 16 October 2025. Health authorities attribute this progress to strengthened response measures led by the Ministry of Health and Population, with technical and logistical support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners.

**"Before the cholera treatment Centre was established, we recorded deaths due to the disease. But since it opened in early August, no cholera-related deaths have been reported in our health area,"** said Dr. Juicael Bokoba, care coordinator at the Integrated Health Center in Loukoléla.

The Mossaka-Loukoléla district remains the most affected area, accounting for more than half of the 808 cases reported nationwide as of 16 October, including 66 confirmed and 742 suspected cases. To improve patient care and reduce mortality, WHO established four Cholera Treatment Centers (CTCs) in the hardest-hit districts through its Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE).

In addition to deploying rapid response and mobile laboratory teams, WHO trained 88 frontline workers

in case management and infection prevention and control. The organization also delivered over 14 tons of essential medical supplies, including medicines, laboratory kits, and water treatment products. Since most of the 67 reported deaths occurred in communities rather than health facilities, authorities have intensified risk communication and community engagement. More than 170 community health workers have been trained to promote early treatment-seeking behavior and safe hygiene practices.

**"We teach people how to treat drinking water and maintain hygiene to prevent cholera. Our awareness sessions are making a difference,"** said David Akini Maya, a community health worker in Mossaka.

WHO has also supported training for 100 health professionals in water treatment and monitoring to ensure access to safe water in affected communities.

**"Our hope is to end this outbreak quickly and strengthen the country's health system for the future,"** said Dr. Vincent Dossou Sodjinou, WHO Representative in Congo.



# The Truth Behind the Myth: Breast Sucking Isn't Cancer Protection

By Richeal Elikem Dovia

In recent years, social media has circulated several myths about breast cancer prevention — one of the most common being the claim that adult breast sucking helps prevent breast cancer. Medical experts and scientific research, however, have found no evidence to support this idea.

## Understanding the Myth

The misconception likely arises from the well-known fact that breastfeeding — when a woman nurses an infant — can lower a mother's risk of developing breast cancer. This protection is linked to hormonal changes that occur during lactation, including reduced lifetime exposure to estrogen and the shedding of breast tissue after pregnancy and breastfeeding, which helps remove cells with potential DNA damage.

However, adult breast sucking does not produce these hormonal or physiological effects. There is no milk production or hormonal suppression similar to that seen during breastfeeding. Therefore, it does not offer any preventive benefit against breast cancer.

## What Actually Helps Reduce Breast Cancer Risk

Breast cancer prevention involves healthy lifestyle choices and regular screening.

### Medical experts recommend:

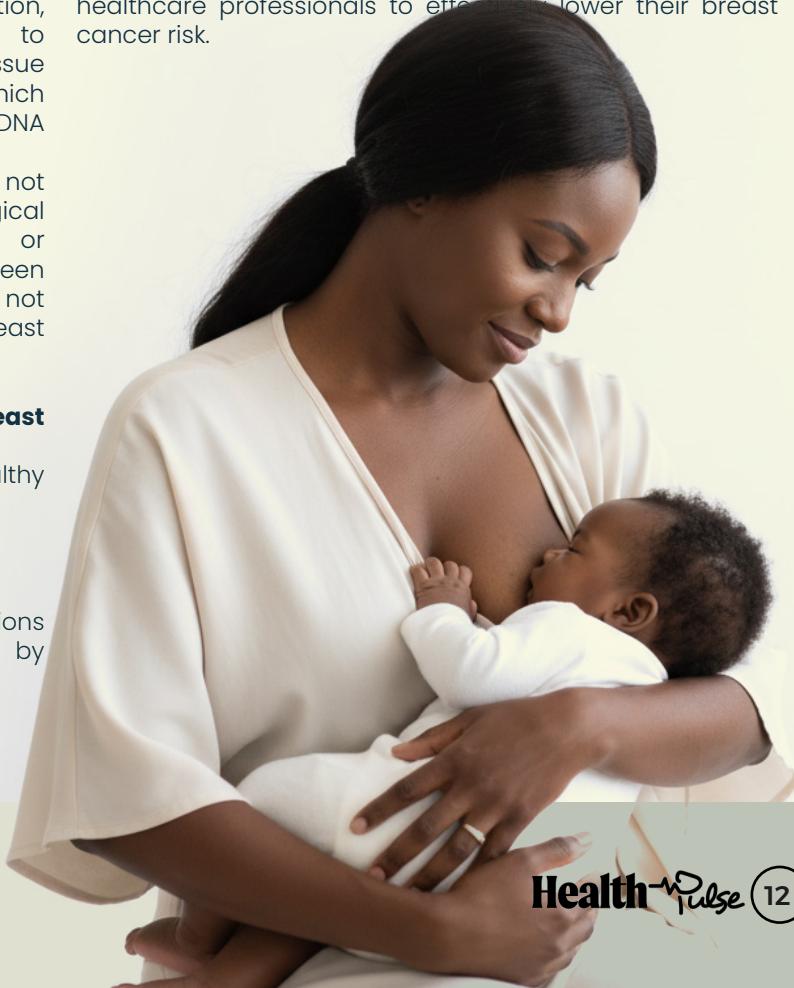
1. Regular self-breast examinations and mammograms as advised by

healthcare providers.

2. Maintaining a healthy weight through balanced diet and exercise.
3. Limiting alcohol intake and avoiding smoking.
4. Early detection — recognizing changes in the breast such as lumps, pain, or nipple discharge.
5. Discussing family history with a doctor to assess personal risk.

## Conclusion

There is no scientific basis for the belief that adult breast sucking can prevent breast cancer. Prevention and early detection rely on evidence-based practices, not myths. Women are encouraged to prioritize regular medical checkups, healthy habits, and open discussions with healthcare professionals to effectively lower their breast cancer risk.





# Digital Connections, Emotional Disconnections:

## How Social Media Shapes Our Mental Health

By Dovia Richeal Elikem

In today's digital age, social media has become an inseparable part of daily life. From connecting with friends to following global trends, platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook shape how people communicate and perceive the world. Yet behind the filters, hashtags, and endless scrolling lies a growing concern: the link between social media use and negative mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and feelings of inadequacy.

### When Connection Turns to Comparison

Social media was designed to bring people closer—and in many ways, it has succeeded. It allows instant sharing of memories, celebration of milestones, and communication across continents. However, constant exposure to curated images of "perfect" lives often leads to unhealthy self-comparison. For many users, especially young people, this digital mirror reflects unrealistic beauty standards and lifestyles. Seeing peers or influencers who appear to "have it all" can trigger self-doubt and

dissatisfaction, even when they know those posts only show highlights. Over time, this can erode self-esteem and contribute to emotional fatigue.

### The Science Behind the Scroll

Experts explain that social media platforms are designed to keep users engaged by tapping into the brain's reward system. Each "like" or positive comment triggers a small release of dopamine, the chemical linked to pleasure and reward. This creates a feedback loop where users crave more engagement to feel validated—often leading to compulsive checking and screen addiction. At the same time, exposure to negative content, cyberbullying, or online harassment can increase stress and anxiety levels. The constant flow of information and comparison can overwhelm the mind, resulting in what psychologist's call "social media burnout."

### Finding Balance in a Digital World

Completely cutting off from social media may not be realistic or

necessary. What matters is how it is used.

- 1. Set healthy limits:** Schedule "offline" hours or use app timers.
- 2. Follow mindfully:** Engage with pages that inspire positivity and growth.
- 3. Take digital breaks:** Spend time outdoors or on hobbies.
- 4. Protect your peace:** Mute or unfollow accounts that cause negativity.
- 5. Seek support:** Talk to trusted friends or mental health professionals when needed.

### The Way Forward

Technology and social media are not inherently harmful, they are tools. When used consciously, they can educate, connect, and empower. But without balance, they can distort reality and harm emotional well-being.

As society continues to navigate the digital era, promoting digital mindfulness is essential. In the end, real connection begins when we log off and look around.





# Glow from Within: How Collagen Keeps Your Skin Firm and Ageless

By Dovia Richeal Elikem

If glowing, plump, and youthful skin is your goal, collagen is your best friend. This powerful protein makes up nearly a third of the body's total protein and serves as the skin's scaffolding, keeping it firm, smooth, and resilient. But as we age, collagen production naturally slows down, and the first signs appear right where we notice them most, on our skin.

## What Exactly Is Collagen?

Collagen is a fibrous protein made from amino acids such as glycine, proline, and hydroxyproline. Think of it as the body's natural "glue" that holds everything together from skin and muscles to tendons and bones. There are over 28 types of collagens, but Type I and Type III dominate the skin. Type I provides structure and strength, while Type III gives skin its softness and elasticity.

## Why Collagen Declines

From your mid-20s, collagen levels begin to drop by about 1% each year. Add in lifestyle factors such as sun exposure, stress, smoking, and poor diet, and the breakdown speeds up. Over time, fine lines, sagging, and dullness set in — clear signs your skin's collagen network is weakening.

## How to Boost Collagen Naturally

The good news? You can support collagen production from both inside and out. Start by eating foods rich in vitamin C, zinc, and copper, nutrients essential for collagen synthesis. Citrus fruits, leafy greens, fish, and nuts are your allies here.

Collagen supplements have also gained scientific backing. Studies suggest that hydrolyzed collagen peptides may improve skin hydration, elasticity, and smoothness by stimulating the cells that make collagen and elastin.

## Skincare That Works

Topical treatments such as retinoids and peptides help kickstart the skin's natural repair process, promoting collagen renewal. In-office treatments — like microneedling, laser therapy, and radiofrequency — go a step further by stimulating deeper collagen remodeling for firmer, more youthful skin.

## The Bottom Line

Collagen may not be a magic fountain of youth, but nurturing is the closest we can get. By combining a healthy diet, good skincare habits, and smart treatments, you can keep your skin strong, supple, and radiant — no filter required.





# Pink Power:

## How Ghanaian Survivors Are Redefining Life After Breast Cancer



Breast cancer changes lives forever. For some, the diagnosis feels like a death sentence; for others, it becomes the beginning of a long, painful, but transformative journey. In this special feature, we share personal stories of pain, resilience, and hope in the face of one of life's fiercest battles from survivors of breast cancer.

### Josephine A. Agbotor: A Mother's Battle for Life

"I was a nursing mother when I found a lump in my breast," Josephine recalls. "It was during breastfeeding. I felt my breast was lumpy, and that's how it all began."

At first, she thought it was nothing serious. Doctors initially told her it was a fibroadenoma — a benign lump. But after surgery, further tests at Korle Bu Teaching Hospital revealed something worse: breast cancer. "That's when my world turned upside down," she says softly.

Chemotherapy was the hardest part of her treatment. "After chemo, you can't sleep, you vomit, you dream strange things. Your nails turn dark, your hair, even your eyebrows fall off," she explains. "You look in the mirror and don't recognize yourself. You look 90 years old when you're just 40."

Yet, through the exhaustion and fear, Josephine kept fighting — for her children, her health, and her future. "It's not easy," she admits. "But when the doctor tells you to do something, you do it. And you help yourself too — with healthy foods, coconut water, and supplements."

Still, Josephine is quick to point out that surviving breast cancer in Ghana goes beyond personal strength. It also requires support — emotional, social, and financial.

"Chemotherapy is expensive. Some cost more than sixty-six thousand cedis," she laments. "We beg the government and the National Health Insurance Scheme to cover more treatments. We need love, not stigma. We need help to fight and live."

Her voice is both weary and defiant as she ends with a message for others: "Cancer is not the end. We can fight it. We can survive."





# Mawuse A Zuttor: Finding Strength Through Pain



For Mawuse, the journey began in 2023 when she discovered a lump during a self-breast examination. "I always liked checking my breasts," she says. "One day, I felt a lump. It kept growing, and it was very painful."

Doctors confirmed her worst fear after a series of tests, mammograms, and biopsies — it was breast cancer. "The day I got the result, I broke down. I thought my world had ended," she recalls. "But thankfully, I'm still here."

Her treatment included six cycles of chemotherapy, a mastectomy (removal of the affected breast), and radiotherapy. "It was not easy," she says, shaking her head. "The chemo makes you weak, but you hold on because you want to live."

Through her experience, Grace learned profound lessons about life and humility. "Cancer taught me to respect people and be humble. Anything can happen to anyone at any time. You don't see these things coming."

Her message to women is powerful and clear: "Don't wait." "Don't wait until your breast changes color or shape. Don't wait until it's too late. Stand in front of a mirror, check yourself. Feel your breasts. If you find anything strange, go to the hospital immediately. Early detection saves lives."

She pauses before adding, "We, Africans, like to wait until something bad happens before taking action. But with cancer, that delay can cost you your life."

## A Shared Message of Hope

Both women's journeys remind us that while breast cancer is a brutal fight, it is survivable — with early detection, treatment, and community support. Their stories echo the same truth: awareness saves lives, and compassion sustains them. Josephine and Grace stand today as living proof that even after hair loss, scars, and sleepless nights, there is still beauty, purpose, and hope. As Josephine says with a faint smile,

**"We didn't just survive cancer — we found new strength in living."**

# Keeping Fit While Dealing with Cancer: Strength in Motion

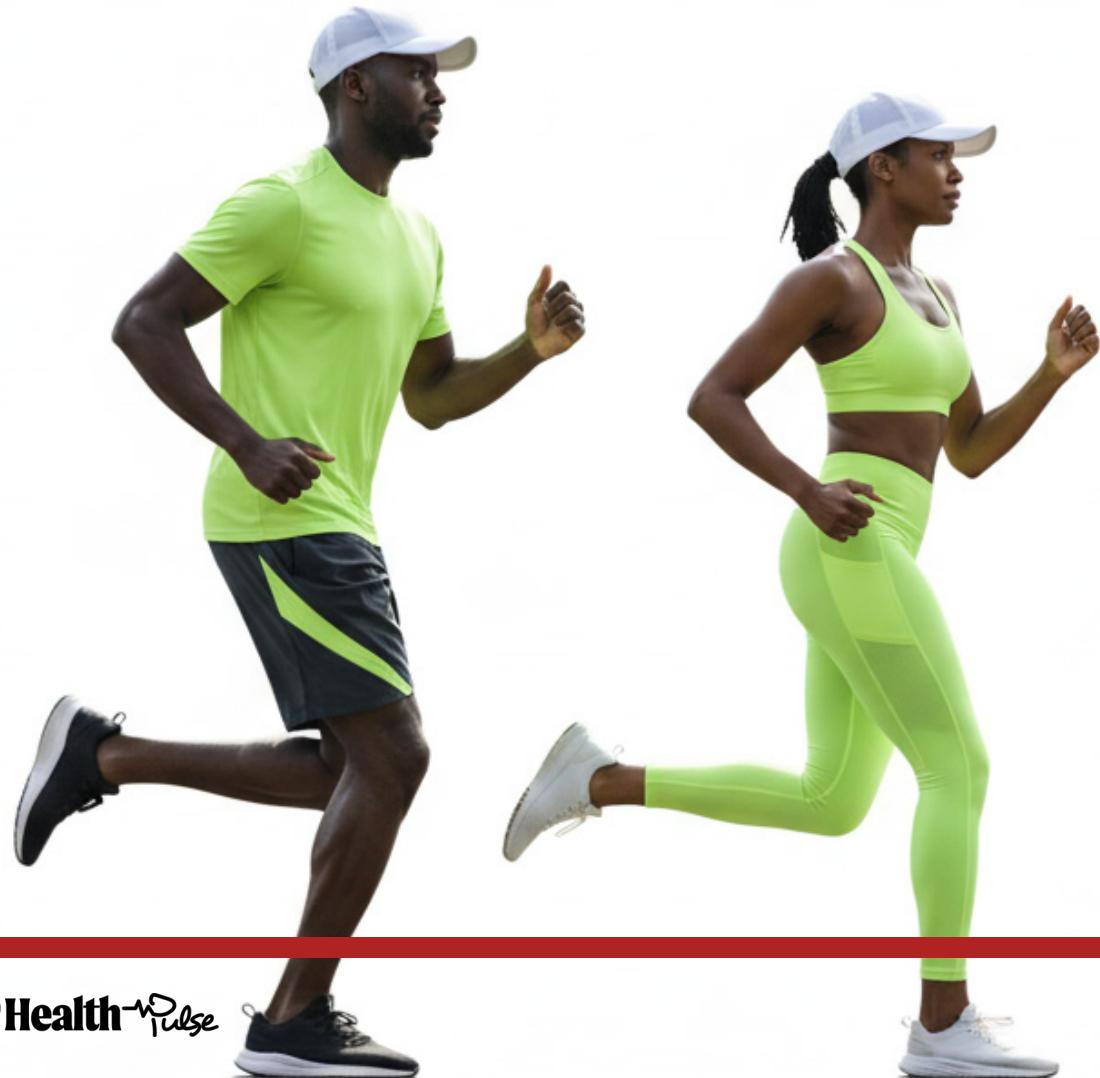
By Gloria Addo

A cancer diagnosis can feel like life has suddenly paused, but maintaining physical activity can be one of the most empowering choices a patient makes. While rest and medical treatment are vital, gentle and consistent exercise offers proven benefits for both the body and mind. Staying fit during cancer isn't about pushing limits—it's about movement as medicine.

## The Power of Movement

Research shows that regular physical activity helps manage fatigue, improve mood, and even enhance the effectiveness of certain cancer treatments. Exercise increases blood flow, boosts oxygen delivery to tissues, and strengthens the immune system. It also helps regulate hormones and reduce inflammation—two factors often linked to cancer progression.

Beyond the physical, movement offers mental relief. Many cancer patients experience anxiety, depression, or loss of confidence during treatment. A simple walk, yoga session, or light stretch can release endorphins, the body's natural "feel-good" chemicals, helping to restore emotional balance and optimism.





## Tailoring Fitness to Treatment

Every cancer journey is unique, and so should every fitness plan. Before starting any exercise routine, it's essential to consult with a healthcare provider or physiotherapist familiar with cancer care. Fatigue, surgery, or chemotherapy side effects may affect balance, energy, or muscle strength, so the key is personalization. Low-impact exercises like walking, swimming, tai chi, and yoga are often ideal. These activities are gentle on joints but effective in building endurance and flexibility. Strength training with light weights or resistance bands helps maintain muscle mass that may be lost during treatment. Deep breathing and stretching exercises can also improve circulation and relieve stiffness.

## Listening to Your Body

Cancer and its treatments can alter energy levels from day to day. Some days may call for rest, while others invite more movement. The goal is not perfection but consistency—doing what you can, when you can. Rest is also part of recovery. By tuning in to your body's signals, you build trust and resilience that support healing.

## Community and Support

Fitness during cancer doesn't have to be a solitary journey. Many hospitals and wellness centers offer cancer-specific exercise programs or group classes. Sharing space with others facing similar challenges can inspire motivation and connection.



## The Takeaway

Keeping fit while dealing with cancer is not about striving for athletic goals—it's about reclaiming control, nurturing strength, and embracing hope through movement. Exercise becomes more than a routine; it's a form of healing, a reminder that the body—despite its battles—still holds the power to move, recover, and thrive.



# Beyond the Gym: The Mental Toll of Chasing the Perfect Body

In a world that celebrates "the perfect body," many men feel the pressure to look strong, lean, and flawless. From gym selfies to fitness influencers, the pursuit of the ideal physique can easily cross the line from motivation to obsession. For some, that obsession becomes a mental health condition known as Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) — a hidden struggle that affects thousands of men but often goes undiscussed.

## What Is Body Dysmorphic Disorder?

BDD is a psychological condition where a person becomes fixated on perceived flaws in their appearance — flaws that are often minor or invisible to others. In men, this can manifest as constant worry about muscle size, hair loss, acne, or facial features. The condition can drive compulsive behaviors like excessive mirror-checking, strict dieting, overtraining, or even seeking unnecessary cosmetic procedures. Unlike normal self-consciousness, BDD takes over daily life. Men suffering from it often spend hours fixating on their looks, experience anxiety in social settings, and may withdraw from friends or relationships.

## The Muscle Dysmorphia Connection

A common form of BDD among men is muscle dysmorphia, sometimes called "bigorexia." It's the mirror opposite of anorexia — men believe they are too small or not muscular enough, even when they're physically fit. This can lead to dangerous behaviors like steroid use, extreme exercise, or restrictive eating that damages both physical and mental health.

## Why It Often Goes Unnoticed

Society rarely associates body image issues with men. Many suffer in silence, believing that insecurity about appearance is a "female problem." This stigma prevents men from seeking help, even when the condition causes serious distress. But the truth is, BDD is not about vanity — it's about anxiety and distorted perception. It's a mental health issue that deserves understanding and treatment, not judgment.



**Strength isn't just about muscles. It's also about mental resilience and self-acceptance. Recognizing when body image concerns have gone too far isn't weakness — it's courage.**

**Because real confidence starts when you stop fighting your reflection and start embracing who you truly are.**



### Finding Help and Healing

Treatment for BDD often includes cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which helps individuals challenge distorted thoughts about appearance, and in some cases, medication to manage anxiety or depression. Talking openly — whether with a therapist, doctor, or trusted friend — is the first step toward healing.



# Beyond the Lump:

## Understanding Rare and Overlooked Forms of Breast Cancer

By Richeal Elikem Dovia

When people think of breast cancer, they often picture a lump discovered during a self-examination or routine screening test. Indeed, this is the most common and widely recognized sign. However, breast cancer is not a one-size-fits-all disease. It can manifest in various ways, each with its own pattern of symptoms, rate of growth, and level of aggressiveness.

Some rare and fast-spreading types of breast cancer may not produce a lump at all. Because these signs are less familiar, they are often misunderstood or overlooked, leading to delayed diagnosis and treatment.

Understanding that breast cancer can appear in many different forms — not just as a lump — is essential. By broadening public awareness and paying attention to all possible symptoms, we can help people seek timely medical care, improve early detection, and ultimately save more lives.

### Inflammatory Breast Cancer (IBC)

Inflammatory breast cancer (IBC) is an uncommon but highly aggressive form of breast cancer, accounting for only 1–5% of all cases. Unlike typical breast cancers, IBC rarely forms a lump. Instead, it spreads rapidly and causes visible and physical changes to the skin and tissue of the breast.

Symptoms to look out for include:

- Redness or warmth of the breast
- Swelling or sudden enlargement
- Skin thickening or dimpling, giving an “orange peel” texture
- Tenderness, heaviness, or pain in the breast

Because these signs often mimic a breast infection (mastitis), IBC can be easily misdiagnosed. If symptoms don't improve after a short course of antibiotics, it's crucial to request further evaluation through imaging or a biopsy. Early and accurate diagnosis can make a significant difference in treatment success and survival rates.

### Awareness Saves Lives

Public awareness about breast cancer often focuses on lumps, but not every case involves one. Recognizing other warning signs, such as those associated with inflammatory breast cancer, is equally important.

Whether you're a woman or a man, any unexplained change in the breast — in color, texture, size, or sensation — should never be ignored. Early detection and prompt medical attention remain the most powerful tools for improving outcomes and saving lives.



# Wellness in -Togetherness: The Link Between Community and Good Health

By Gloria Addo

## Human Connection to Health

When we think of health, we often picture fitness routines, balanced meals, or regular check-ups. But true wellness goes deeper – it includes our ability to form meaningful relationships and feel part of a supportive community. Social and community health is about more than friendship; it's about connection, belonging, and shared purpose. Studies show that people who maintain strong social ties tend to live longer, recover faster from illness, and experience greater happiness overall.

A simple phone call to a loved one, a chat with a neighbor, or spending time volunteering can significantly boost emotional and mental well-being. Human connection releases oxytocin – the “bonding hormone” – which reduces stress and strengthens our resilience.

## When Isolation Takes Its Toll

Unfortunately, loneliness has become one of the silent health challenges of our time. The World Health Organization now recognizes social isolation as a public health concern linked to depression,

anxiety, high blood pressure, and even heart disease.

In today's digital world, many people feel “connected” online but disconnected in real life. Virtual interactions can't replace the emotional warmth of in-person contact. That's why it's important to be intentional – make time to meet, talk, and share moments face-to-face whenever possible.

## Building Stronger Communities

Community health is the collective strength of the people who live and work together. Healthy communities are built on trust, inclusion, and shared responsibility. They provide access to clean water, quality healthcare, safe public spaces, and educational opportunities.

When people come together – whether for a local clean-up, a health campaign, or a community exercise group – they create a ripple effect of positivity. Each act of collaboration improves not just the environment but also mental and emotional wellness.

“When communities thrive, individuals flourish.”

Active involvement in your neighborhood or local groups can give you a sense of purpose and belonging that enriches your overall well-being.

## Staying Connected in a Digital Age

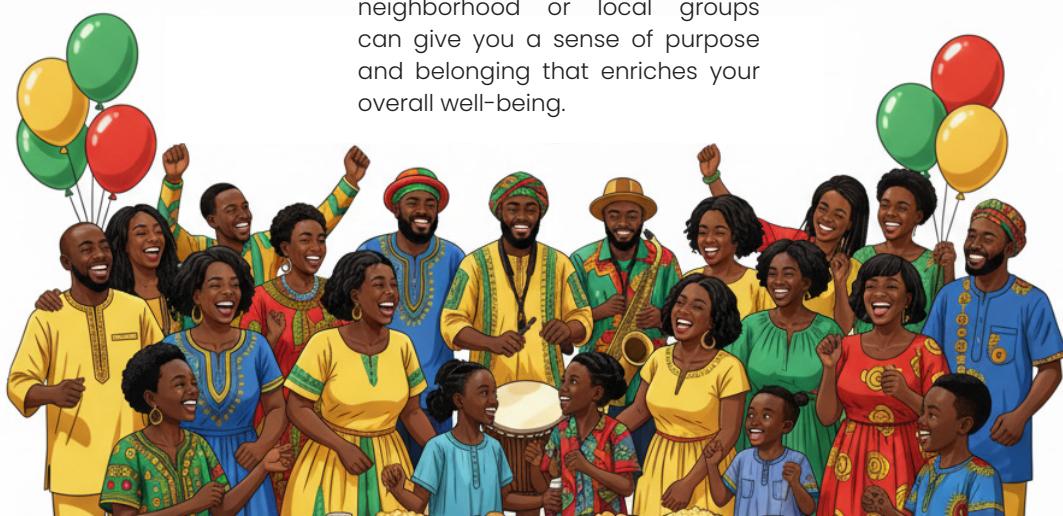
Technology has made it easier to stay in touch, yet harder to truly connect. The key is mindful engagement: use social media to strengthen real relationships, not replace them. Share meaningful content, check in genuinely with friends, and balance online time with offline experiences.

Simple acts – greeting a neighbor, joining a hobby club, or helping a community cause – can make a world of difference.

## The Bottom Line

Social and community health reminds us that wellness is not an individual pursuit but a shared journey. Strong relationships and united communities build resilience, reduce stress, and nurture happiness.

So, step outside, connect, and contribute – because every smile, handshake, and shared effort strengthens not just our communities, but our collective health.



# Stop Wasting Ginger!

## Try This Simple Spoon Trick

By Richeal Elikem Dovia

Peeling ginger can be tricky — with its uneven shape and knobby surface, using a knife often leads to wasted pieces and frustration. But there's a smarter, safer, and cleaner way: use a spoon!

Instead of reaching for a peeler or knife, grab a regular teaspoon and gently scrape the skin off the ginger. The spoon easily glides over curves and crevices, removing just the thin layer of skin without cutting away the flavorful flesh underneath. This simple trick works especially well for fresh ginger, where the skin is softer and comes off effortlessly.

Not only does this method help reduce waste, but it also makes ginger prep faster and safer — no risk of cutting yourself on a slippery root. Plus, it's perfect for getting into those tight, bumpy areas that a knife can't reach.

The next time you're cooking a stir-fry, brewing tea, or making a homemade remedy, remember this clever tip:

### Peel ginger with a spoon It's quick, clean, and incredibly satisfying!



# Communication and Cohesiveness: The Heartbeat of a Healthy Family

By Dovia Richeal Elikem

**A happy, healthy family doesn't just happen, it's built on two powerful pillars: open communication and strong togetherness. These qualities create an environment where trust grows, love deepens, and healthy habits flourish.**

Open communication is the foundation of emotional well-being at home. It's about more than simply talking; it's about listening with empathy and responding with care. When family members can share their thoughts, feelings, and worries without fear of judgment, it builds trust and reduces tension. Parents who communicate openly with their children encourage honesty and self-confidence, while children who feel heard are more likely to make responsible choices and reach out for help when needed.

Cohesiveness, on the other hand, is what keeps the family connected. It's that deep sense of belonging and teamwork that reminds everyone they're part of something bigger. Families that stay close-knit are better equipped to face challenges—whether it's

financial stress, illness, or emotional struggles—because they know they can rely on one another. Cohesive families also tend to develop healthier routines, such as eating balanced meals together, staying physically active, and supporting each other's goals.

When communication breaks down or family unity fades, stress and misunderstandings can take over. This can weaken emotional bonds and even impact physical health. Studies have shown that families who experience frequent conflict or isolation are at higher risk for anxiety, depression, and unhealthy coping habits. That's why it's important to nurture connections every day.

The good news is that building a cohesive, communicative family doesn't require grand gestures. It's often the small, consistent efforts that make the biggest difference—sharing meals, celebrating small wins, or spending time together without distractions. Simple habits like saying "thank you," checking in after a long day, or listening without interrupting can strengthen trust and affection.

In the end, a healthy family is one that talks, listens, and stands together. When communication flows freely and everyone feels valued, home becomes a place of peace, support, and joy, a true foundation for lifelong health and happiness.



# Brainstem Injury Linked to Persistent Neurological Effects of Severe COVID-19

By Richeal Elikem Dovia

New research has revealed that damage to the brainstem — the part of the brain that controls essential body functions such as breathing, heart rate, and sleep — may be responsible for many of the long-term neurological symptoms experienced by survivors of severe COVID-19. The findings, published by an international team of neuroscientists and clinicians, provide critical insight into the biological underpinnings of “long COVID”, a condition that continues to affect millions worldwide years after the pandemic’s peak.

## The Brainstem Connection

Using post-mortem analyses and advanced neuroimaging techniques, researchers discovered clear evidence of inflammation and cellular injury in the brainstem of patients who had suffered severe COVID-19. This damage, they found, was not limited to the respiratory centers but extended to regions responsible for regulating alertness, balance, and autonomic functions.

“The brainstem acts as the body’s command center,” explained one of the study’s lead authors. “When it’s inflamed or structurally damaged, even

slightly, the ripple effects can impact nearly every system — from sleep and movement to mood and concentration.”

Patients recovering from severe COVID-19 frequently report symptoms such as chronic fatigue, dizziness, disrupted sleep, loss of balance, and cognitive impairment — all of which can be linked to brainstem dysfunction.

## The Role of Inflammation and Hypoxia

Researchers believe the damage is primarily driven by two mechanisms: prolonged inflammation and oxygen deprivation (hypoxia) during acute infection. Severe COVID-19 often triggers an intense immune response known as a cytokine storm, releasing inflammatory molecules that can cross the blood-brain barrier and injure delicate neural tissue.

Additionally, when the lungs struggle to deliver sufficient oxygen, the brainstem — which is particularly sensitive to oxygen levels — may sustain long-lasting injury.



### Implications for Recovery and Treatment

The study's authors emphasize that recognizing brainstem involvement could transform post-COVID care. They recommend that patients recovering from severe infection undergo neurological assessment and rehabilitation therapy, including breathing exercises, cognitive training, and mental health support.

"Long COVID is not purely psychological," noted one researcher. "We're now identifying the biological fingerprints of the condition, which brings us closer to developing targeted treatments."

### A Step Toward Understanding Long COVID

The discovery represents a major step toward understanding how COVID-19 can cause persistent neurological and physiological symptoms long after the virus has left the body. It also highlights the need for ongoing surveillance and support for those experiencing long-term effects.

As the study concludes, "The pandemic may have subsided, but its impact on the brain and body continues. Understanding brainstem injury may hold the key to unlocking recovery for millions worldwide."

## Finding Balance:

# How to Stay Emotionally Steady When Life Feels Uncertain

By Richeal Elikem Dovia

During challenging times like a pandemic, it's completely normal to experience fear, anxiety, sadness, or uncertainty. These emotions are part of how our minds react to sudden change and loss of control. However, when stress becomes prolonged or overwhelming, it can lead to unhealthy coping habits — including stress-related weight gain.

Understanding how stress affects your body is the first step toward managing it effectively. When you're stressed, your body releases cortisol, a hormone that can increase appetite and trigger cravings for comfort foods — usually those high in sugar or fat. Over time, this emotional eating response can contribute to weight gain and lower overall well-being.

To prevent this cycle, it's important to find healthy ways to cope with your emotions.

### Here are a few practical strategies:

- 1. Acknowledge your feelings.** It's okay to feel anxious or sad. Recognizing your emotions instead of suppressing them helps you process them more effectively.
- 2. Stay physically active.** Even light exercise, like walking or stretching, helps reduce stress hormones and boosts mood-lifting endorphins.
- 3. Choose mindful eating.** Pay attention to your hunger cues and avoid using food as emotional comfort. Opt for nutritious meals that support energy and immunity.
- 4. Stay connected.** Reach out to family, friends, or support groups through calls or video chats. Social connection is a powerful stress buffer.
- 5. Practice relaxation techniques.** Deep breathing, meditation, journaling, or even simple quiet time can calm the mind and ease tension.

**6. Limit news overload.** Constant exposure to distressing news can heighten anxiety. Stay informed but take breaks when needed.

Managing your emotions is not about ignoring your stress — it's about learning to respond in ways that protect both your mental and physical health.



**By caring for your mind and body together, you can navigate uncertainty with greater balance, strength, and self-compassion.**

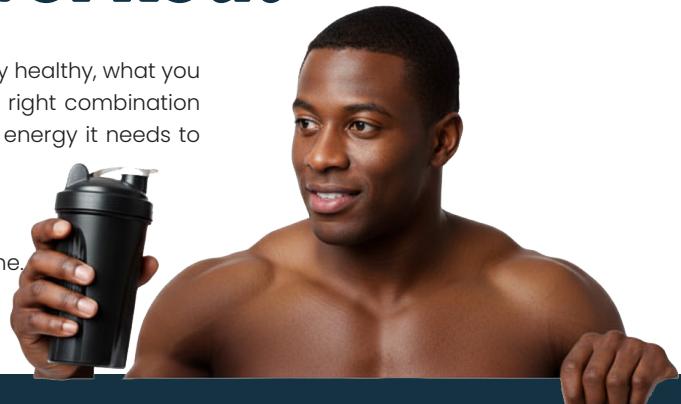


# Fueling Fitness: Simple Eating Tips for Every Workout

Whether your goal is to build muscle, burn fat, or simply stay healthy, what you eat around your workouts can make a big difference. The right combination of nutrients before and after exercise gives your body the energy it needs to perform — and the building blocks it needs to recover.

## Before Your Workout: Fuel for Performance

Think of your pre-workout meal as fuel for your body's engine. It should provide enough energy to power your muscles while keeping you comfortable and focused.



### 1. Timing Matters

Ideally, eat 2–3 hours before you exercise. If you're short on time, a lighter snack 30–60 minutes before can still help.

### 2. What to Eat

- **Carbohydrates** are your body's preferred source of energy. They help prevent fatigue and sustain performance.

Examples: Oats, whole-grain bread, rice, fruit, or yogurt.

- **Protein** supports muscle performance and helps reduce muscle breakdown.

Examples: Eggs, Greek yogurt, lean chicken, or protein shakes.

- **Healthy fats** can be included in small amounts if you're eating well before your session.

Examples: Avocado, nuts, or olive oil.

### 3. Sample Pre-Workout Meals

- Oatmeal with banana and a drizzle of honey
- Chicken and brown rice with vegetables
- Whole-grain toast with peanut butter and sliced apple

- A smoothie with yogurt, berries, and spinach

Hydration: Don't Forget Water  
Even mild dehydration can affect performance.

- Before your workout: Drink 1–2 cups of water about 30–60 minutes before you start.
- During exercise: Sip water regularly, especially if it's hot or the workout lasts over 60 minutes.
- After exercise: Replenish with water or an electrolyte drink if you've sweated a lot.

Examples: Sweet potatoes, rice, fruit, whole-grain pasta.

Combining both helps your body absorb nutrients efficiently.

### 2. Sample Post-Workout Meals

- Grilled fish with quinoa and steamed vegetables
- Protein shakes with banana and oats
- Scrambled eggs on whole-grain toast with avocado
- Greek yogurt with mixed berries and honey

### Balancing Protein, Carbs, and Fats

For most people, a good workout meal ratio looks like this:

- Pre-workout: 60% carbs, 25% protein, 15% fat
  - Post-workout: 50% carbs, 35% protein, 15% fat
- Of course, these can be adjusted depending on your fitness goals.
- For muscle gain, increase protein slightly.
  - For fat loss, focus on lean proteins and moderate carbs.

### 1. Focus on Two Key Nutrients

- Protein: Repairs and builds muscle. Aim for 20–30 grams after your workout.

Examples: Eggs, chicken, tofu, fish, protein shake.

- Carbohydrates: Refill your energy stores.

**Nutrition and exercise go hand in hand. A well-balanced diet — rich in whole foods, lean protein, and complex carbs — supports every rep, stride, and stretch you make. Fuel your body before, hydrate during, and refuel after, and you'll see better results, recover faster, and feel stronger every day.**



# Birth Control Pills and Cancer: Myth, Misconception, or Medical Fact?

By Gloria Addo

For decades, birth control pills commonly known as "the pill" have empowered women with greater control over their reproductive health. But alongside their benefits, there's been ongoing public concern and scientific debate about their potential link to cancer.

Oral contraceptives contain synthetic versions of the hormones estrogen and progesterone. These hormones regulate a woman's menstrual cycle and prevent ovulation. "Because hormones play a key role in cell growth and tissue development, long-term hormonal changes can influence cancer risk—positively or negatively," she explains.

## The Risks

Research has shown that using birth control pills can slightly increase the risk of certain cancers—particularly breast and cervical cancer. Women who currently use the pill are reported to have a 20–30% higher risk of developing breast cancer compared to those who have never used it. However, this risk declines gradually after stopping the pill and returns to normal within about ten years. In the case of cervical cancer, prolonged use of the pill—especially beyond five years—has been associated with a higher likelihood of developing the disease. "This is why regular Pap smears and HPV screenings are essential for sexually active women,"

## The Protective Effects

Interestingly, the same pills that may increase the risk of certain cancers can also reduce the risk of others. Studies consistently show that birth control pills lower the risk of ovarian and endometrial (uterine) cancers—two of the most deadly reproductive cancers in women. The protective effect can last for decades after stopping the pill.

"By preventing ovulation, the pill reduces the repeated cell changes that occur in the ovaries and uterine lining. This long-term benefit often outweighs the temporary risks for many women, depending on their personal health and family history."

## What Women Should Know

Experts emphasize that the decision to use birth control pills should always be individualized. Factors such as age, family history of cancer, smoking habits, and other health conditions must be considered.

"The key is balance and regular check-ups. For most women, the pill remains a safe and effective option. The important thing is to have open, informed discussions with your healthcare provider."





# Health Terms On Breast Cancer

## Comprehensive Male Breast Cancer Glossary: Key Medical Terms Explained

When most people think of breast cancer, they picture it as a disease affecting women. However, men also have a small amount of breast tissue and though rare, cancer can develop there too. Here are some important terms to understand when learning about male breast cancer:

**Basic Breast Anatomy and Biology:** Men have small amounts of breast tissue located just behind the nipple. It's within this tissue that cancer can begin to form.

**Breast Tissue:** Men have small amounts of breast tissue located just behind the nipple. It's within this tissue that cancer can begin to form.

**Ducts and Lobules:** Most male breast tissue starts in the ducts, the small tubes that carry milk from the lobules, where milk is produced, even in men.

**Hormone Receptors:** Many male breast cells are estrogen receptor (ER) and/or progesterone receptor (PR) positive. This means the cells grow in response to these hormones.

- **HER2 (Human Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor 2):** A protein that can promote cancer growth. Testing for HER2 helps doctors determine the best treatment options.

Types of Male Breast Cancer

- **Invasive Ductal Carcinoma (IDC):** The most common type of breast cancer in men, making up over 90% of cases. It begins in the ducts and can spread to surrounding tissues.
- **Ductal Carcinoma in Situ (DCIS):** A very early and non-invasive form of cancer that remains confined to the ducts.
- **Papillary Carcinoma:** A rare type that typically grows slowly and has a good prognosis when detected early.
- **Inflammatory Breast Cancer (IBC):** A rare but aggressive cancer that causes redness, warmth, and swelling of the breast.
- **Paget's Disease of the Nipple:** Affects the skin of the nipple and areola, often appearing as scaling, itching, or irritation.

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