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 Date ) 25.08.2025

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Circular No. 01-36/2025

All Deputy Director Generals, Ministry of Health  
 All Directors, Ministry of Health  
 All Provincial/ Regional Directors of Health Services  
 Directors of National/ Teaching and District General Hospitals  
 Directors of Private Health Institutions  
 Heads of Health Institutions  
 Medical Officer of Health

### World Breast Cancer Awareness Month - October 2025

Breast cancer continues to be the most commonly diagnosed cancer among females, ranking first both globally and in Sri Lanka. It represents a substantial share of the overall cancer burden in females and poses a serious public health concern due to its rising incidence, impact on quality of life, and associated mortality. According to the National Cancer Registry – Sri Lanka (2022), there were 5,447 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed in females, accounting for approximately 28% of all cancer cases among women in the country—solidifying its position as the most prevalent cancer affecting Sri Lankan females. Additionally, 188 males were diagnosed with breast cancer in the same year, marking a nearly 50% increase compared to 2021. Data from the Registrar General's Department (2020) reported 792 deaths due to breast cancer, including 773 females and 19 males.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month is observed every October as a global health initiative aimed at increasing awareness about the disease. The campaign promotes early detection, which facilitates timely diagnosis and treatment, and helps spread information about the support services available to individuals affected by breast cancer. Detecting breast cancer in its early stages significantly improves the chances of a full recovery, as early-stage breast cancer is often highly treatable and potentially curable.

The early detection of breast cancer is facilitated by the following,

- Raising public awareness about the signs and symptoms of breast abnormalities  
 (‘ඔබ විසින්, ඔබ වෙනුවෙන්’) (Annex I)
- Self Breast Examination (SBE)
- Clinical Breast Examination (CBE)



Screening and early detection services for breast cancer are available across Sri Lanka through a range of healthcare facilities, ensuring widespread access for the population. These services are provided through:

- **Well Woman Clinics**, conducted island-wide by the offices of the Medical Officer of Health (MOH)
- **Healthy Lifestyle Centres**, located in Primary Health Care Institutions and other hospitals
- **Breast Clinics**, operating in designated secondary and tertiary care hospitals (Annex II)
- **Cancer Early Detection Centres**, established in Narahenpita, Matara, Jaffna, Ratnapura, and Batticaloa

To support and enhance the screening process, mammography services (Annex III) and pathological examination facilities have been made available throughout the country. These services play a critical role in facilitating early diagnosis and ensuring timely treatment.

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP), in collaboration with multiple stakeholders, continues its efforts to raise awareness and enhance early detection of breast cancer. This year's national event is scheduled to take place on **Saturday, 11th October 2025**, at the **Havelock City Mall Shopping Complex**.

The event will include a **full-day exhibition** covering various aspects of cancer, with a primary focus on breast cancer. In conjunction with the exhibition, **an awareness program** led by clinicians will be conducted to educate the public on prevention, early detection, and treatment options.

A special highlight of the event will be a **pink-themed fashion show**, designed to challenge the stigma associated with breast cancer, promote social acceptance, and raise awareness about supportive alternatives such as the use of 'jata' (head-gear) and wigs, commonly used by women undergoing chemotherapy.


All Provincial Director of Health Services (PDHS), Regional Director of Health Services (RDHS), Hospital Directors, Medical Officers of Health (MOOHs), and Medical Officers in charge of Primary Medical Care Units across the island are requested to carry out the following activities within their respective areas. These initiatives should be undertaken with the support and collaboration of key stakeholders, including the Consultant Community Physicians (CCPs), Medical Officer for Maternal & Child Health (MO/MCH), Medical Officer for Non-Communicable Diseases (MO/NCD), Regional Supervising Public Health Nursing Officers (RSPHNOs), Public Health Nursing Officers (PHNOs) and Health Education Officers (HEOs). Their combined efforts are crucial in promoting breast cancer awareness and facilitating early detection at the grassroots level.

1. All clinics—including Well Woman Clinics, Healthy Lifestyle Centres, and Cancer Early Detection Centres—across the island are hereby requested to organize breast cancer screening programmes targeting women aged 50 to 60 years. As the incidence of breast cancer increases with age, screening efforts will focus primarily on this age group. These programmes may be conducted throughout the month of October in line with Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The NCCP recommends that each programme aim to include a minimum of 100 women within this target age group. Elderly women who visit these healthcare facilities during this period should be encouraged to enroll in the screening programme.

2. The heads of hospitals where breast clinics are conducted are advised to review and assess the efficiency of these services and take necessary actions to enhance their effectiveness. In particular, attention should be given to identifying and implementing institutional-level measures aimed at reducing patient waiting times for pathology and radiology investigations. These improvements are essential in aligning with the global breast cancer control targets for 2040, which include: detecting 60% of breast cancer cases at an early stage, diagnosing breast cancer within 60 days, and ensuring treatment completion in more than 80% of diagnosed patients. By optimizing service delivery and reducing delays, hospitals can make a significant contribution toward achieving these international goals and improving outcomes for breast cancer patients in Sri Lanka.
3. All MOOH should re-evaluate and re-inform their staff regarding the importance of accurately maintaining the "Follow Up Registers" and take necessary steps to update this process.
4. The color "pink" is recognized internationally as a symbol of support and remembrance for those who have recovered from breast cancer, those who have lost their lives to the disease, and to honor the ongoing efforts to combat it. As such, throughout the month of October, it is encouraged that hospitals and healthcare facilities be adorned with pink-themed decorations to visibly promote breast cancer awareness.
5. These awareness activities can also be extended to involve non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and other relevant institutions, fostering a broader community engagement in support of the cause. Lecture discussions and training programmes on the early detection of breast cancer should be organized and/or facilitated by all hospitals and MOH offices island-wide. These educational and capacity-building activities are to be actively promoted across Well Woman Clinics, Healthy Lifestyle Centres, surgical clinics, and Cancer Early Detection Centres, with the aim of strengthening early detection and timely treatment efforts.
6. All Medical Officers of Health (MOOHs) are requested to raise awareness within District Secretariat offices in their respective districts by engaging with the District Secretariat Coordinating Committees. This collaborative approach will help extend the reach of awareness activities to administrative and community levels.
7. Hospitals and healthcare institutions are encouraged to establish a "Breast Cancer Awareness Station", staffed by nursing officers, public health nursing officers (PHNOs), and midwives, who will provide key information and guidance to the public. These stations should also be stocked with awareness pamphlets to support education efforts.
8. The message of early detection of breast cancer can be effectively disseminated via social media platforms such as your organization's website, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, or Viber groups. This can be done using the data included in the circular, along with awareness materials provided by the NCCP, including banners (Annex IV), Self-Breast Examination flashcards and manikins with checklists (Annex V), and brochures (Annex VI).



I greatly appreciate your leadership, guidance and active participation in this national effort.

  
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Dr. Asela Gunawardena  
**Director General of Health Services**

**Dr. ASELA GUNAWARDENA**  
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*Copies:*

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- ii. Hon. Deputy Minister of Health and Mass Media*
- iii. All Provincial Health Ministers*
- iv. Secretary - Ministry of Health and Mass Media*
- v. Additional Secretary (Public Health Services) - Ministry of Health and Mass Media*
- vi. Additional Secretary (Medical Services) - Ministry of Health and Mass Media*
- vii. Director - National Cancer Control Programme*
- viii. Director - Family Health Bureau*
- ix. Director - Non-Communicable Diseases Unit*
- x. Director - Health Promotion Bureau*
- xi. Director - Primary Health Services*
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- xiii. Director - Environmental and Occupational Health*
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- xv. Director - National Institute of Health Sciences*
- xvi. Director - Estate and Urban Health*
- xvii. All Deputy Director Generals/D.G. (Non-Communicable Diseases, Medical Services I and II, Public Health Services I and II, Planning, Education; Training and Research Dental Services, Occupational and Environmental Health, Laboratory Services - Ministry of Health and Mass Media*
- xviii. Director Nursing (Public Health Services & Medical services)*
- xix. College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka College of Oncologists, Sri Lanka Association of Surgical Oncologists, Sri Lankan Association of Colorectal Surgeons, Sri Lanka Society of Breast Surgeons*
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