

No, deodorant does not cause breast cancer! Myths a radiologist must keep debunking

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Let's talk breasts. It's a topic Dr. Amy Patel spends a lot of time discussing in a never-ending quest to dispel the myths women believe about breast cancer.

Patel, a breast radiologist and medical director of Women's Imaging at

Liberty Hospital, in Liberty, Mo., swats down misinformation like Wonder Woman deflecting incoming fire with her magic bracelets.

She recently championed new Missouri legislation that requires [insurance companies](#) to pay for more aggressive screening of younger women at high risk of the disease.

"Unfortunately there's so much inaccurate information out there in [social media](#)," she said. "As much as I'm a huge advocate of social, there's just so much [fake news](#), alternative facts out there regarding breast health and mammography, and [breast cancer](#)."

"So if I can get out there and try to debunk those stereotypes and those myths, I try to take those opportunities when I can."

There are three myths in particular she constantly hears from patients.

No, you cannot get breast cancer from deodorant.

No, that pain in your breast doesn't mean you have cancer.

Yes, you can get breast cancer even if there's no history of it in your family.

Women who experience pain in their breasts sometimes take that as a sign of cancer, she said.

"But very little studies show a correlation between breast pain and cancer," said Patel. "Typically breast cancer, whether you're a man or woman, is painless. And typically, if you have breast pain associated with breast cancer, it's a more pronounced, more advanced cancer where you start to see maybe skin changes and redness of the breast."

"Typically breast pain is hormonally related ... in premenopausal women and not associated with breast cancer. So that's one myth we try to debunk. And then deodorant's a big one."

Ah, deodorant.

"A lot of times I'll have patients who say they make their own organic deodorant," she said. "And I say, 'Well, you should save your time and money because there's no [scientific evidence](#) that shows that commercial deodorant causes breast cancer.'

"I always tell my patients at speaking engagements, 'I use Secret deodorant. It's OK if you feel guilty that you have to buy your [deodorant](#) rather than make it because it's really not going to help you in terms of ... carcinogens or anything like that.'"

Sometimes women skip mammograms and say no to biopsies because no one in their family has had breast cancer and they don't see a need.

"So I try to tell patients actually, the majority of women who get breast cancer have no family history so it's really important to get that mammogram every year," she said.

Current guidelines from the American Cancer Society say women at average risk of [breast cancer](#) should begin yearly mammograms by age 45—it used to be 40—and can transition to every other year beginning at age 55, if they wish.

Missouri's new law, which Patel worked on and went into effect Aug. 28, requires insurance companies to cover screenings for [women](#) ages 25 to 29 if they are at higher risk, as well as screenings every six months from age 30.

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