



15 OCTOBER
**BREAST
HEALTH DAY**



Press Release

European Commission welcomes Europa Donna's call-to-action for Breast Health Day – 15th October 2009

Growing body of evidence shows 30-60 minutes of exercise each day essential for breast health.¹ Arantxa Sánchez-Vicario joins Europa Donna's campaign

Brussels, 14 October 2009 - **15 October is Breast Health Day** and its focus this year is raising awareness of the scientifically proven link between physical activity and breast health. Europa Donna - The European Breast Cancer Coalition and Arantxa Sánchez-Vicario joined forces to encourage women to choose a more active lifestyle through the new campaign '*Active today for your breast health tomorrow*'.

"Europa Donna's initiatives including Breast Health Day have been welcomed by the European Commission as supporting established Community cancer and major chronic disease prevention policies outlined in the European Code against Cancer¹ as well as the Council Recommendations on cancer screening.²"

In this regard, Dr. **Karl Freese, Principal Administrator in the European Commission's Health and Consumers Directorate General (SANCO), highlighted the constructive role Europa Donna is playing in endorsing the EU guidelines for quality assurance in breast cancer screening and diagnosis³.** "Much has still to be achieved to bring equitable quality screening services to all European women", he added, "as the recently published external report 'Cancer Screening in the European Union - Report on the implementation of the Council

¹ Europe Against Cancer. European Code Against Cancer and scientific justification: Third version (2003). Retrieved from <http://www.cancercode.org> on 28/09/09

² The Council of the European Union. Council Recommendation of 2 December 2003 on cancer screening (2003/878/EC). Retrieved from: http://eurlex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=en&numdoc=32003H0878&model=guichett on 28/09/09

³ European Commission. Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection (2006). European guidelines for quality assurance in breast cancer screening and diagnosis. Retrieved from: <http://bookshop.europa.eu/eubookshop/publicationDetails.action?pubuid=235525&offset=1> on 28/09/09





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Recommendation on cancer screening⁴, and the subsequent report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions ‘Implementation of the Council Recommendation of 2 December 2003 on cancer screening (2003/878/EC)’⁵ demonstrate”.

Inactivity is estimated to cause 10-16 percent of all breast cancer cases, which are estimated to be over 430,000 in Europe every year¹. The good news is that engaging in moderate exercise for at least **30-60 minutes every day** is an easy and achievable step towards breast cancer risk reduction and future breast health¹.

“Physical activity is a crucial determinant to breast cancer risk, as a number of scientific studies conducted across decades demonstrate,” explained professor Peter Boyle, President of the International Prevention Research Institute and former Director of WHO’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

All available data were reviewed by an IARC Working Party in 2002⁶ and it was concluded that increased physical activity was associated with a decreased risk of breast cancer. Since then, further evidence to support this association has continued to accrue.

“New data from ongoing studies continue to build on the existing body of evidence linking regular physical activity and lower breast cancer risk”, added Professor Boyle. “In a recent evaluation of the causes of breast cancer in France, it was concluded that 10.1% of all breast cancers in France in 2000 could be attributed to physical inactivity. This should be compared with the 4.8% attributable to overweight and obesity”. He concluded: “It is so important for women to work on prevention and one identified way to reduce breast cancer risk is to engage in exercise every day from a young age”.

⁴ Commission of the European Communities. Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Implementation of the Council Recommendation of 2 December 2003 on cancer screening (2003/878/EC). Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/genetics/documents/com_2008_882.en.pdf on 28/09/09

⁵ European Commission. Cancer screening in the European Union. Report on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on cancer screening – First Report. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/genetics/documents/cancer_screening.pdf on 28/09/09

⁶ IARC Handbooks of Cancer Prevention, Volume VI: Weight Control and Physical Activity, IARC Press 2002





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At the launch of the new campaign in Brussels today, former world #1 tennis player Arantxa Sánchez-Vicario shared her enthusiasm for an active lifestyle: “Playing sports or just working out for a goal can be extremely rewarding, refreshing and energising,” she said. “You do not need to be a champion. With a bit of commitment and persistence, you can compete with yourself and beat your own record by walking five minutes more, running further or riding your bicycle faster.”

Simple activities such as getting off your bus one bus stop earlier or taking the stairs can be easily included in a daily routine and even household activities count. “We want to ensure that women are aware that what they do today and from the youngest age to keep active can influence their future breast health,” said Europa Donna’s President, Ellen Verschuur. “Breast health is the responsibility of women of all ages”.

Women will find the mini-diary “More active today for your breast health tomorrow” with tips to engage in a more active lifestyle on the website www.breasthealthday.org.

Through the website, women can also get involved in Europa Donna’s viral campaign by sending a personalised electronic postcard to their friends and family. The card is a way to encourage exercise and to celebrate physical activity as a choice that women can easily make to support their breast health. Each e-card sent will populate an online map tracking the impact of Breast Health Day.

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About Breast Health Day

Europa Donna established Breast Health Day as an annual appointment on 15 October to remind girls and women in Europe about the importance of lifestyle factors that can influence their future breast health and help prevent breast cancer and the role of early detection in fighting breast cancer.

About breast cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women worldwide and in Europe, with estimated 430,000 new cases in European women every year. In Europe, breast cancer still claims the lives of more women than any other cancer. According to WHO, at least one third of all cancer cases are preventable. Excess body weight and physical inactivity are known risk factors that account for 25-33 percent of breast cancer cases.

About Europa Donna

Europa Donna - The European Breast Cancer Coalition aims to improve awareness of breast health and healthy lifestyle factors that can help women live long, healthy lives. Europa Donna is a non-profit organisation representing the interests of European women regarding breast cancer to local and national authorities and to institutions of the European Union. Europa Donna has affiliated member groups in 44 European countries.

