



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Go Pink...All Year Round

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**Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column**

October—also known to many as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month—lasts just 31 days. However, the efforts to diagnose, prevent and treat the disease occur year round.

While great strides have been made there's still a long way to go: more than 40,000 women and 400 men die annually of breast cancer. As October turns to November, I encourage you to continue to support those fighting the disease and take steps to reduce your risk. Here are some of the best ways you can prevent breast cancer:

***Limit your alcohol consumption:*** Studies have shown that the more alcohol you drink, the greater your risk of developing breast cancer. Medical experts suggest that if you choose to drink, limit it to no more than one alcoholic beverage per day.

***Stay active:*** Being overweight or obese also increases the risk of breast cancer. Experts encourage people to exercise regularly and eat nutritious foods to stay at a healthy weight.

***Don't smoke:*** It goes without saying that smoking is bad for your health. In addition, evidence also shows a strong link between smoking and breast cancer risk—especially in premenopausal women.

In addition, mammograms remain an effective tool in the diagnosis of the disease. Now, thanks to a law enacted last year, patients must be notified in writing if an initial screening indicates that they have dense breast tissue. The law requires that women be provided with an explanation of how dense breast tissue can present additional challenges for cancer detection efforts, followed by a discussion about the possible need for additional screenings.

A second law—which was also enacted last year—requires health insurers to cover breast reconstruction surgery after a partial mastectomy.

I was pleased to support both laws knowing how much they mean to those affected and their families.

In addition to these measures, the Adelphi NY Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline and Support Program is also helping those fighting the disease. Established in 1980, the goal of the initiative is to educate, support and empower breast cancer patients professionals and the community. The program is free, and it helps women find answers to questions about breast cancer protection, detection and treatment. In addition, it's toll-free breast cancer hotline (1-800-877-8077) helps 4,000 women—and their families—annually.

The following links also offer answers to the most frequently asked questions about breast cancer and additional resources:

[Adelphi NY Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline & Support Program](#)

[New York State Department of Health: About breast cancer](#)

As we turn the calendar page from October to November, I urge you to continue to take steps to reduce your risk and support those who are courageously fighting back against breast cancer.

