

HEALTH 

## Pink ribbon products may not help the cause

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 By Lilian Kim

**Consumers probably noticed they're seeing a lot more pink this month; that's because October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The pink ribbon campaign began in 1992 to promote both research and awareness, but there's reason to be weary of all that pink.**

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Pink is just about everywhere these days: on ads, on products, in our neighborhoods, and even on Monday Night Football. It's all in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month and many people are making sure they're buying from companies that support breast cancer research.

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"If it's a choice between a pink product and I'm already going to buy something that's around the same thing, I'd rather go for the pink product," says Dee Okoronkwo, a San Francisco resident.

However, the advocacy group Breast Cancer Action in San Francisco says buyer beware. The organization's "Think Before You Pink" campaign encourages people to look beyond those pink ribbons.

"The pink ribbon isn't regulated at all. We don't know just by seeing the pink ribbon on it, if any money at all goes to breast cancer," says Kasha Ho with Breast Cancer Action.

Some products do state how much money

goes toward research, but others simply put pink on their products to raise awareness without donating any money at all. When in doubt, Breast Cancer Action says people should call companies to find out where the money goes and to which organizations.

"What we need right now is not more awareness, what we need is action and what our organization often says that if shopping could cure breast cancer, it would have been cured by now," says Ho.

Yet despite the questions surrounding pink ribbon products, they likely won't be going away anytime soon. Cause marketing is considered one of the most effective techniques companies use today.

"When a business ties in with a cause, it makes them seem more compassionate and human and that's really what consumers are responding to," says consumer psychologist Kit Yarrow.

It's uncertain where the pink ribbon originated, but it's believed to have started as a grass roots campaign -- which clearly has evolved into something much more commercial.

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