

The Pink Ribbon Story

A pink ribbon symbolizes breast cancer awareness. The merging of ribbon and symbolism in the United States came about in two huge leaps. The first occurred in 1979 when a wife of a hostage who had been taken in Iran was inspired to tie yellow ribbons around the trees in her front yard, signaling her desire to see her husband come home again. Step two occurred 11 years later, when AIDS activists looked at the yellow ribbons that had been resurrected for soldiers fighting the Gulf War and turned the ribbon bright red, looped it, spruced it up and sent it onto the national stage during the Tony awards to represent those affected by AIDS.

The stage was set for the evolution of the breast cancer awareness ribbon. Susan G. Komen for the Cure® has used the color pink since its inception in 1982. The first Komen Race for the Cure® logo design was an abstract female runner outlined with a pink ribbon and was used during the mid 1980s through early 1990s.

In 1990, the first breast cancer survivor program was launched at the Komen National Race for the Cure® in Washington, D.C. The survivors wore buttons that were printed in black and white. Later that year, the survivor program developed, and pink was used as the designated color for Komen to promote awareness and its programs. Pink visors were launched for survivor recognition.

In 1991, pink ribbons were distributed to all breast cancer survivors and participants of the Komen New York City Race for the Cure®. Then in 1992, Alexandra Penney, editor-in-chief of *Self* magazine, wanted to put the magazine's second annual Breast Cancer Awareness Month issue over the top. She did this by creating a ribbon and enlisting the cosmetics giants to distribute them in New York City stores. And thus, the birth of the pink ribbon!

In 2007, twenty-five years after its inception, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation changed its name to Susan G. Komen for the Cure. The name change was accompanied by a new brand image. The new logo included a pink "running ribbon" designed specifically for Komen for the Cure. This ribbon signifies the promise Komen Founder Nancy G. Brinker made to her dying sister, Susan G. Komen, to do what she could to end breast cancer.

Today, any generic pink ribbon can be used to represent breast cancer awareness while the Komen "running ribbon" is reserved solely for use by Susan G. Komen for the Cure®.