

Breast Cancer Awareness Month: Importance of Early Detection

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a powerful reminder to stay informed, stay alert, and take charge of your health. Everyone is encouraged to recognize the signs and reach out to a healthcare provider if something does not feel right.

The pink ribbon associated with Breast Cancer Awareness Month represents hope, strength, and support for those affected. Wearing the ribbon not only brings awareness to the cause, but also shows support, honors survivors, and is a sign of remembrance for those lost to the disease.

Early Detection Saves Lives!

Like many health issues, early detection is important for breast cancer treatment and can increase the likelihood of survival.

Self-examination, exams by a medical professional, and mammograms are all forms of early detection. Learn about the signs and symptoms to look for when conducting a self-examination.

Though rare, men can also get breast cancer. About 1 out of every 100 breast cancers diagnosed in the United States is found in a man, according to the CDC. Signs and symptoms of breast cancer are similar for men and women. Discuss any findings or changes with your doctor.

Signs and Symptoms

Knowing the signs and symptoms of breast cancer is crucial for early detection. Performing monthly breast self-exams will make it easier to identify changes in your breast. **If you detect any of these abnormalities, please see a healthcare professional for evaluation.**

Signs and symptoms to keep an eye out for [National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc. and CDC].

- Changes in the look or feel of the breast or nipple
- Changes in the breast or nipple appearance
- Any nipple discharge
- Pain in any area of the breast
- A new lump in the breast or underarm

If you have any signs or symptoms, this does not mean it is breast cancer. However, get any changes evaluated by a healthcare professional when discovered.

Risk Factors

It is important to know the risk factors for breast cancer.

- Gender—Breast cancer occurs in women nearly 100 times more often than men.
- Age—Most breast cancer affects women 50 years or older
- Family History or Genetic Factor—If a direct relative (mother, father, sister, or child) has been diagnosed with breast cancer, you have a higher risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer in the future.

How to lower your risk of breast cancer through environmental and lifestyle changes.

- Eat a healthy diet—Aim for 3.5-5 cups of fruits and vegetables daily
- Stay active—Even 20 minutes of physical activity a day can lower your risk factor
- Minimize alcohol consumption

Breast Examinations—Self, Clinical, and Mammograms

Breast Self-Exam

Adult women should complete a breast self-exam monthly. Checking for any of the signs and symptoms above is important to early diagnosis and treatment. It is important to report any abnormalities to your health care provider.

Clinical Breast Exam

A clinical breast exam is performed by a healthcare professional who is trained to recognize abnormalities and warning signs. This exam often occurs during annual physical exams. This exam is in addition to a monthly self-exam; it is not a replacement. A clinical breast exam is another form of early detection, trying to catch any potential warning signs of breast cancer before they develop even further.

Mammogram

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast. The results are examined by a specialist who's trained to find any suspicious spots. Mammograms are the most effective way to identify breast cancer. Mammograms often find lumps before they can even be felt through a physical examination.

It is recommended that women 40 and older get an annual mammogram.

Women under 40 years old who have risk factors, such as a significant family history of breast cancer, should speak to their healthcare provider to see if a mammogram is recommended earlier than 40.

Women 40 and older with no symptoms or risk factors should have regularly scheduled mammograms to detect any signs of breast cancer as early as possible.

Article by Allison McCauley-Cook



Breast Cancer Risk



1 in 8 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. It is the second most common cancer in women and the second most common cause of cancer death in women in the US. By knowing your risk, you can make an informed choice that is best for you.

Breast Cancer Risk Factors

A **risk factor** is anything that increases your chances of getting a disease, such as breast cancer.

Most people who get breast cancer have few or no known risk factors. Risk factors only make it more likely that a person will develop breast cancer.

Having a risk factor does **not** mean that you will definitely get breast cancer. Risk factors **cannot** tell if a person will or will not get breast cancer.

Depending on your risk factors, your health care provider might suggest different types of tests or recommend that you start breast cancer screening earlier.

That's why it's important to talk to a health care provider about your risk factors. Together, you can decide the best breast cancer screening plan for you.

Risk Factors You Can Change

Some breast cancers might be prevented with lifestyle changes. Here are some risk factors you can change to lower your risk:

It's best not to drink alcohol. The risk for breast cancer increases as you drink more alcohol.

Be as active as possible. Women who get regular physical activity have a 10% to 20% lower risk of breast cancer.

Aim for 2½ to 5 hours of activity each week. If you aren't active now, start slowly and build up over time.

Get to and stay at a healthy weight. Excess body fat can increase your risk of breast cancer. Ask your health care team what a healthy weight means for you.

If you currently take or are thinking about taking hormone therapy, talk to a doctor about the risks and benefits.

Breastfeeding might slightly lower your risk.

Know your family history. Your risk increases if one or more of your relatives has (or has had) breast cancer.

Risk Factors You Cannot Change

Some breast cancer risk factors can't be changed. But it's important to know if you have them so you can discuss your risk with a health care provider. Some of these risk factors increase your risk more than others.

Personal history of breast cancer. If you've had breast cancer in one breast, you have a higher risk of developing a new cancer in the other breast, or another part of the same breast.

Family history of breast cancer. If you have a first-degree relative (parent, sibling, or child), your risk is almost double. If you have two first-degree relatives, your risk is about three-fold.

Inherited gene changes. About 5% to 10% of all female breast cancers are related to inherited gene mutations (DNA changes passed down from a parent).

- On average, a woman with a *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* mutation has up to a 7 in 10 chance of getting breast cancer by age 80. This risk goes up if more family members have had breast cancer.
- Other less common gene mutations (such as *PALB2* or *TP53*) can also cause inherited breast cancer.

If you have a family history of breast cancer or inherited gene changes, your health care provider may have you see a genetic counselor. They may also suggest certain medicines or procedures to help reduce your risk.

Radiation to the chest. People who've had radiation near the chest have a much higher risk of breast cancer.

Dense breast tissue. People whose breasts appear dense on mammograms have a higher risk of breast cancer. Dense breast tissue can also make it harder to see cancers on mammograms.

Certain breast conditions. Some noncancerous (benign) breast conditions may increase breast cancer risk.

Years of menstruation. If you started menstrual periods before age 11 or went through menopause after age 55, you might have a slightly increased risk of breast cancer due to a longer lifetime exposure to estrogen and progesterone.

Exposure to diethylstilbestrol (DES). Women who were given an estrogen-like drug called DES during pregnancy have a slightly increased risk of breast cancer.

Being taller. Taller women have a higher risk of breast cancer. The reasons aren't clear, but it might be related to factors that affect early growth.

Age. Most breast cancers are found in women 55 and older, but women of any age can get breast cancer.

Biological sex. Anyone can get breast cancer, but it is much more common in those who were born female.

Talk to your health care provider about your risk factors and breast cancer screening.

Male Breast Cancers

Breast cancer in people who were born male is rare, but it can happen. When it does, it's more likely to be diagnosed at a later or more advanced stage. Risk factors for male breast cancer include:

- *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* gene mutations
- Family history of breast or ovarian cancer
- Klinefelter syndrome
- Testicular disorders
- Gynecomastia (enlarged breasts)
- Diabetes and obesity

Disparities in Breast Cancer

While breast cancer is slightly more common in White women, death rates for Black women are 40% higher.

- Black women are more often diagnosed at a later stage, when cancer is more likely to have spread and can be harder to treat.
- Black women have higher rates of triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC), an aggressive type of breast cancer. TNBC is also more likely to develop in women who haven't gone through menopause and are younger.
- Although *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* gene changes are more common in Black women, these individuals are less likely to get or be offered genetic testing.

Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tools

Risk assessment tools can help give an estimate of your breast cancer risk based on different factors.

There is no standard tool, so different tools might give different risk estimates for the same person.

One is the National Cancer Institute Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool (BCRAT), also known as the Gail Model. It estimates your risk of getting invasive breast cancer in the next 5 years and over your lifetime.

Please know: Risk assessment tools can't predict if you will or won't get breast cancer. You should always discuss results with a health care provider.



Visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/breastcancer or call us at **1-800-227-2345** to learn more. We're here when you need us.



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Breast Cancer Fact Sheet

for Patients and Caregivers



Breast cancer can start in any part of one or both breasts. For women in the US, breast cancer is the most common cancer (after skin cancer) and the second-leading cause of cancer death (after lung cancer).

Risk Factors

Risk factors for breast cancer that you cannot change include:

Sex: Being born female is one of the strongest risk factors for breast cancer. Males can also get breast cancer, but it is much more common in females.

Age: As a person gets older, their risk of breast cancer goes up. Most breast cancers are found in women age 55 or older.

Personal or family history: Someone who has had breast cancer in the past or has a parent, sibling, or child with breast cancer has a higher risk of getting it. Having more than one close blood relative increases the risk even more. However, it's important to know that most people with breast cancer don't have a close blood relative with the disease.

Inheriting gene changes: Certain gene changes (most commonly in *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* genes) can create a higher risk for breast cancer.

Starting menstruation early or having late menopause: There may be a higher risk due to longer exposure to the hormones estrogen and progesterone.

Having dense breast tissue: People whose breasts appear dense on mammograms have a higher risk of breast cancer. Dense breast tissue can also make it harder to see cancers on mammograms.

Having radiation to the chest: Women who were treated with radiation therapy to the chest before age 30 have a much higher risk for breast cancer.

Some benign breast conditions: Certain noncancerous breast conditions can increase the risk of getting breast cancer.

Lifestyle-related risk factors for breast cancer:

- Drinking alcohol
- Excess body weight, especially after menopause
- Not being physically active
- Getting hormone therapy after menopause with estrogen and progesterone therapy
- Never having children or having a first child after age 30
- Certain types of birth control

Prevention

There is no sure way to prevent breast cancer, and some risk factors can't be changed, such as being born female, age, personal or family history of the disease, and inherited gene changes. But there are things a person can do that can help lower the risk for breast cancer. Avoiding or limiting alcohol, getting regular physical activity, and getting to and staying at a healthy weight might help lower risk.

If you have a family history or inherited gene changes, your health care provider may have you see a genetic counselor or recommend certain medicines or procedures. They can help you better understand your risks and make informed decisions about your care.

Screening and Early Detection

Screening is a process used to look for cancer in people who have no symptoms. The earlier breast cancer is found, the better the chances for successful treatment. The American Cancer Society recommends the following for finding breast cancer early in women at average risk:

- **Women ages 40 to 44** should have the choice to start yearly breast cancer screening with a mammogram (x-ray of the breast).
- **Women ages 45 to 54** should get a mammogram every year.
- **Women 55 and older** can switch to a mammogram every two years, or can continue yearly screening. Screening should continue as long as a woman is in good health and is expected to live at least 10 more years.
- Screening MRI and screening mammograms are recommended for certain women at high risk of breast cancer. Talk to a health care provider for more information.
- If you are getting a mammogram for breast cancer screening, you should understand what to expect and what the test can and cannot do. Mammograms can miss cancer (called a false-negative) or look abnormal even though it's not cancer (called a false-positive). Additional tests can be costly and stressful.

Signs and Symptoms

The most common sign of breast cancer is a new lump or mass. While most lumps or masses are not cancer, it is important to have a health care provider check them. Other signs of breast cancer can include swelling of all or part of a breast (even if no lump is felt); skin dimpling (sometimes looking like an orange peel); nipple pain or retraction (turning inward); nipple discharge (other than breast milk); nipple or breast skin that is red, dry, flaking, or thickened; or swollen lymph nodes under the arm or near the collar bone. Have any breast changes checked by a health care provider.



Visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer or call us at **1-800-227-2345** to learn more. We're here when you need us.



Treatment

Treatment for breast cancer depends on the type and stage of the cancer and results of testing that might be done on the tumor, as well as the person's age, other health problems, and personal choices. If you have breast cancer, talk to your doctor about the best treatment for you.

Living With Breast Cancer

Breast cancer affects a person's quality of life. Physical, social, mental health, spiritual, and money issues can come up at any time.

People with breast cancer may be helped by palliative care at any time. Palliative care focuses on helping manage symptoms, addressing issues, and improving quality of life.

Good communication between a person with cancer and the health care team is important and involves:

- Asking and answering questions
- Working together to set care goals
- Making shared decisions
- Managing side effects and other issues
- Scheduling follow-up tests and care



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Diet and Physical Activity Cancer Fact Sheet for Patients and Caregivers



Getting to and staying at a healthy weight, following a healthy eating pattern, avoiding alcohol, and moving more can help reduce your risk of cancer.

Impact on cancer risk

- **Excess body weight** may increase the risk of some cancers, including esophageal, breast (postmenopausal), colon and rectal, endometrial, kidney, liver, pancreatic, stomach, gallbladder, ovarian, thyroid, as well as multiple myeloma.
- **Not following a healthy eating pattern** may increase the risk of cancer. Diets high in red and processed meat, highly processed foods and refined-grain products, and sugary drinks are linked to a higher risk of some cancers. Diets that focus on colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes (beans and peas), and fish or poultry are linked to a lower risk of some cancers.
- **Drinking alcohol** can increase the risk for cancers of the mouth, throat, larynx, esophagus, liver, colon and rectum, female breast, and stomach. The more alcohol a person drinks, the higher their cancer risk.
- **Getting regular physical activity** helps decrease the risk of colon, female breast, endometrial, kidney, and possibly other cancers such as liver and lung.

American Cancer Society Guidelines on Diet and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention

Get to and stay at a healthy weight during your life.

- Keep body weight within the healthy range. Talk with your doctor about what a healthy weight would be for you and how you might get to it.

Move more, and sit less.

Move more.

Adults:

- Get 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity each week (or a combination of these). Getting at least 300 minutes is best.
- Examples of moderate-intensity activities include walking, dancing, mowing the lawn, volleyball, or bicycling.
- Examples of vigorous-intensity activities include jogging or running, fast bicycling, swimming, jumping rope, martial arts, or basketball.

Children and teens:

- Get at least 1 hour of moderate or vigorous activity each day.

Sit less.

- Avoid long periods of sitting or lying down. Spend less time sitting or lying down while watching TV, using your cell phone, playing computer or video games, or using other screen-based entertainment.

Have fun, and be fit.

- You can be active by walking, swimming, gardening, doing housework, or even dancing. Walking or biking instead of driving is a good idea if you can do it and also counts as physical activity.
- If you have children, grandchildren, or pets, playing with them and going on walks are fun ways to stay active.

Follow a healthy eating pattern with a focus on plant sources.

A healthy eating pattern means eating:

- Foods high in vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients
- Foods that are not high in calories
- A colorful variety of vegetables – dark green, red, and orange
- Fiber-rich beans and peas
- A colorful variety of fruits
- Whole grains (in bread, pasta, etc.) and brown rice

A healthy eating pattern means limiting or not including:

- Red meats like beef, pork, and lamb
- Processed meats like bacon, sausage, luncheon meats, and hot dogs
- Sugary drinks, including soft drinks, sports drinks, and fruit drinks
- Highly processed foods and refined-grain products

Tips for a healthy eating pattern:

- Fill most of your plate with colorful vegetables and fruits, beans, and whole grains.
- Choose fish, poultry, tofu, or beans as your main sources of protein instead of red meat or processed meats.
- If you eat red or processed meats, choose lean cuts and smaller portions.

More healthy eating tips:

- Prepare meat, poultry, and fish by baking, broiling, or poaching rather than by frying or grilling.



- Make healthy choices when you eat away from home. Include vegetables, whole fruit, and other low-calorie foods instead of high-calorie foods such as french fries, potato and other chips, ice cream, doughnuts, and other sweets. Restaurants often serve big portions, but you don't have to eat it all at one time. Ask for a to-go box, and pack up your leftovers for lunch or dinner the next day.
- If you want to enjoy high-calorie foods once in a while, eat smaller portions.
- Pay attention to food labels in the grocery store and ingredients listed on restaurant menus.
- Limit your use of creamy sauces, dressings, and dips with vegetables and fruits.

It is best not to drink alcohol.

- If you do drink alcohol, have no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 drinks per day for men. One drink is 12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.
- All types of drinks with alcohol increase your risk of cancer and other health problems. It doesn't matter whether you choose beer, white or red wine, or mixed drinks.



Visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active or call us at **1-800-227-2345** to learn more. We're here when you need us.



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7 things to know about getting a mammogram

Mammograms (breast x-rays) are the best tests we have to find breast cancer early, when treatment is more likely to be successful. Talk with your doctor about when you should get a mammogram. Here's what you need to know about getting a mammogram.

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast that's used to find breast changes. Mammograms are done with a machine that only looks at breast tissue. The machine takes x-rays at lower doses of radiation than the x-rays done to look at other parts of the body.



1 What is a mammogram?



2 Where to get it

Find a center that does many mammograms in a day. When you find a center you like, stick with it. Having all your mammograms at the same place will make it easier for doctors to compare images from one year to the next. If you've had mammograms done at other centers, have those images sent to your new center.

It's best to schedule your mammogram about a week after your menstrual period. Your breasts won't be as tender or swollen, which means less discomfort during the mammogram.



3 When to schedule it

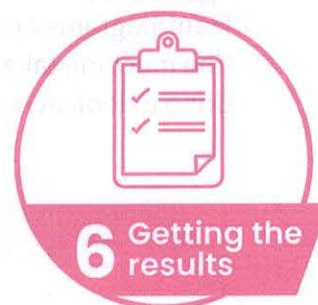
Wear a 2-piece outfit because you will need to remove your top and bra. **Do not** use deodorant, antiperspirant, powder, lotion, or ointment under your arms or on your chest on the day of your mammogram. These products can appear as white spots on the x-ray.



The entire process takes about 20 minutes. The breast is compressed between 2 plastic plates for a few seconds while an x-ray is taken. The plates are moved to a new position, and the breast is compressed again to take another view. The same process is done on the other breast. Flattening the breast can be uncomfortable, but it is needed to provide the clearest view.

You should get your results within 10 days. If you don't, call to ask about them. Your mammogram report will tell you if you have dense breast tissue. Talk with your doctor about what that may mean for you.

If doctors find an area of concern, you may need new x-rays or other tests. That doesn't mean you have cancer. The doctor may have seen something that just looks different or the images weren't clear.



For women who are uninsured or can't afford the cost, free or low-cost mammogram services are available. Some of these programs are held during National Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, while others are offered year round. Call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345** to find a program near you.



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Visit **cancer.org/breastcancer** for more breast cancer information and support.





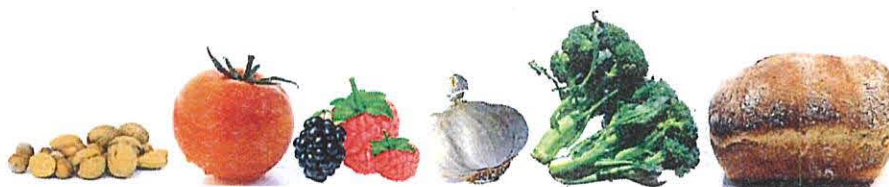
A healthy lifestyle can reduce cancer risk, improve quality of life, and optimize survivorship.

**4 CUPS OF FRUITS AND
VEGETABLES A DAY**

**30 MINUTES OF PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY A DAY**

1 OR MORE OF THESE A DAY:

- Apples
- Beans
- Berries
- Broccoli & Cruciferous Vegetables
- Cherries
- Coffee
- Cranberries
- Dark Green Leafy Vegetables
- Flaxseed
- Garlic
- Grapefruit
- Grapes
- Green Tea
- Soy
- Tomatoes
- Walnuts
- Whole Grains
- Winter Squash



For more cancer fighting tips, visit
CANCERDIETITIAN.COM

