

Understanding Breast Cancer and Breast Cancer Treatment Options

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers, affecting a significant portion of the population. While it is more prevalent in women over the age of 50, it is important to note that breast cancer can affect anyone, including men. This widespread condition emphasizes the need for regular screening and awareness.

Routine breast screening is crucial in detecting breast cancer early and improving the chances of successful treatment and survival. Speak with your doctor or specialist for recommendations on when you should initiate and how often you should have screenings. By understanding the risks and taking proactive measures, individuals can better protect themselves and manage their health.

If you or a loved one are concerned about breast cancer, remember that treatment has advanced significantly in recent years. It's also worth remembering that early diagnosis can often stop the cancer in its tracks.

Risk factors

- The risk of developing breast cancer increases if your close relative had the condition, particularly if it was at an early age. Men can get breast cancer too. So if your mother, sister, father, brother even second degree relatives such as grandparents or aunts/uncles had breast cancer then this may increase your risk.
- Genetic testing in families has identified a hereditary risk for breast cancer.
- Women who have had breast cancer in one breast are at increased risk of developing it in the other.
- Women who have produced estrogen for longer periods may be more at risk. This includes women who began menstruation early, never had children, entered menopause late, or took hormone replacement for a long period.
- Women who were exposed to radiation therapy to the chest to treat another cancer (e.g. Hodgkin lymphoma) before age 30.
- Certain breast changes or types of breast density may also contribute to risk.

Things you can do

- Practice self-examination.
- Discuss with your doctor the appropriate age when you should start breast imaging (such as mammograms) based on your risk factors. This recommendation can vary based on individual factors.
- Follow blogs for healthy eating online with particular emphasis on low-fat, high-fiber whole foods.
- Limit alcohol consumption. [Doctors](#) are warning there is no safe level.

- Exercise regularly.
- If you are at high risk for breast cancer, talk to your doctor about other measures they might recommend, this may include additional breast imaging or participation in a high-risk breast screening program.

Signs to watch for

See your doctor if you notice any changes in your breasts or in your underarm areas, including lumps, thickening, nipple changes and nipple discharge. Be alert for skin changes or changing breast size. Pain is not normally an early breast cancer symptom.

Diagnosis

Final diagnosis can involve some or all of these tools:

- clinical examination
- breast imaging including ultrasound, mammogram, or MRIs
- needle biopsy, which involves removing cells and/or fluid from the breast via a fine needle
- surgical biopsy, which surgically removes the lump and an area around it

Treatment options

- Surgery to remove cancer in a specific area or to remove the breast. Surgery is sometimes planned to follow one or more other treatment options.
- Radiation to destroy cancer cells in a specific area.
- Chemotherapy to destroy or control cancer both in a local area and prevent spread.
- Hormone therapy to control cancer or prevent it returning.

Contact your doctor or a specialist for more information on breast cancer, ways to minimize your risks, screening recommendations, treatment options and any other questions you may have about the disease. Knowing the facts about breast cancer empowers you to detect it early, make informed health decisions, reduce fear, advocate for others, and make healthier lifestyle choices.

This information is provided to supplement the care provided by your physician or mental health professional and is not to be used as a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician or another qualified health or mental health professional if you have questions about a medical condition or plan of treatment.

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