



Breast Health Basics

Learn the Facts

- Each year, more than 200,000 cases of breast cancer are expected to be diagnosed among women in the U.S. and about 40,000 women will die from the disease.
- Except for skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common type of cancer among women today.
- Early detection and effective treatment for breast cancer have been shown to improve survival.



Am I at Risk for Breast Cancer?

- All women are at risk for breast cancer.
- The most common risk factors for breast cancer are being female and getting older.
- Most women who get breast cancer have no other known risk factors.
- Although breast cancer is more common in women over the age of 40, younger women can also get breast cancer.
- Men can also get breast cancer, but it is rare. It is about 100 times more common in women.

What can I do to reduce my risk of getting breast cancer?

You can do things that may improve your overall health and may reduce your risk of breast cancer, including:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Add exercise into your routine.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Limit menopausal hormone use.
- Breastfeed, if you can.



Questions & Answers About Breast Cancer Risk

My mother had breast cancer. Does that mean that I will get it too?

Most women who get breast cancer have no family history of the disease. The breast cancer risk linked to family history may be due to either shared lifestyle factors, such as diet, exercise or alcohol use or inherited genetic mutations. However, only about 5-10 percent of breast cancers are due to inherited genetic mutations. If someone in your family has had breast cancer or you are concerned about your risk, talk to a doctor.

What role does exercise play in reducing breast cancer risk?

Exercise may help lower your risk of breast cancer. (This benefit is seen most clearly in women after menopause.) Exercise fights obesity and may lower estrogen levels. It may also boost the immune system so that it can help kill or slow the growth of cancer cells.

You don't need an intense exercise routine to get some benefit. Any activity equal to walking about 30 minutes a day can slightly lower your breast cancer risk.

For more information about risk factors, visit www.komen.org/risk



I am currently taking birth control pills. Do they increase my risk of breast cancer?

If you are taking birth control pills now, your breast cancer risk is slightly increased. This increased risk becomes less after you stop using them. After about 10 years your risk returns to normal.



Does drinking alcohol increase my chance of getting breast cancer?

Yes! Studies show that drinking alcohol increases your risk. The more alcohol you drink, the higher your risk of getting breast cancer. If you drink, have less than one drink a day.

My breasts feel lumpy and tender at certain times of the month. Does this increase my risk of breast cancer?

Breast lumpiness with tenderness or pain at certain times of the month is common, especially before your period. However, this does not increase your chance of getting breast cancer. Know how your breasts normally look and feel. If you notice any change, see a doctor.

For more information about breast cancer, visit www.komen.org or call our breast care helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 10 PM ET.