Research Saves Lives

Factors inside and outside of the body can affect breast cancer risk and outcomes. Those outside the body are often called environmental factors. There is no one scientific definition for what is considered an environmental factor, and different scientists may use different categories when deciding whether a risk factor is environmental.

Environmental factors include many things found in nature that we eat, drink, touch or breathe, as well as man-made factors. They can include chemicals or pollutants, radiation, microorganisms (infections), or lifestyle factors such as diet, exercise or smoking. Even medications, such as birth control pills or menopausal hormone therapy, can be considered environmental factors. Some environmental exposures are passive, such as sunlight (ultraviolet rays) and air pollution. Others are active, such as eating a healthy diet.

Identifying which environmental factors keep us healthy and which can increase the risk of breast cancer is an important part of understanding breast cancer risk and survival.

Learn more about environmental factors and breast cancer [http://sgk.mn/lNm27mV](http://sgk.mn/lNm27mV)

Our Research Investment 1982–2019

Nearly $24 million in over 55 research grants and 7 clinical trials focused on Environmental Factors

What We’re Investigating

- Determining how chronic use of antibiotics leads to a lack of bacterial diversity in the body and affects breast cancer metastasis
- Identifying the changes in DNA that are caused by environmental factors—such as reproductive factors, lifestyle and diet—and may drive the development of breast cancer
- Determining whether traffic-related air pollution affects breast cancer risk and incidence

Read more about environmental factors that affect the risk of breast cancer recurrence from Komen grantee Dr. John Pierce, in our Science Buzz Series. [http://sgk.mn/lcmGBuV](http://sgk.mn/lcmGBuV)

Read how hormone exposures may affect breast cancer risk, from the Komen-funded Two Sisters Study.

What We’ve Learned from Komen-funded research

- Lifestyle factors such as poor diet, lack of exercise and smoking are associated with an increased risk of breast cancer recurrence.
- How a woman’s body responds to hormone exposures during the different phases of life may affect her risk of breast cancer.
- Certain high-risk Human Papilloma Viruses (HPVs)—like those that cause cervical cancer—may also play a role in the development of some breast cancers.