



## Breast cancer: Are you at risk?

Breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in women. Each year, more than 230,000 women—and about 2,300 men—are diagnosed with the disease, according to the National Cancer Institute.<sup>1</sup> Many risk factors, such as your genes and family history, cannot be controlled. However, a healthy diet and a few lifestyle changes may reduce your overall chance of cancer in general.<sup>2</sup>

### About breast cancer

Breast cancer starts in the tissues of the breast and is caused by uncontrolled cell growth. Cancer cells ignore the messages the body sends that tell abnormal cells to stop growing. They eventually crowd out and kill healthy cells.

### There are two main types of breast cancer:<sup>3</sup>

- **Ductal carcinoma.** This cancer starts in the tubes (ducts) that move milk from the breast to the nipple. Most breast cancers are of this type.
- **Lobular carcinoma.** This cancer starts in parts of the breast called lobules, which produce milk.

In rare cases, breast cancer can start in other areas of the breast. Breast cancer may be invasive or noninvasive. Invasive means it has spread to other tissues. Noninvasive means it has not yet spread; this is referred to as “in situ.”



The symptoms to the right are warning signs of breast cancer.<sup>4</sup> While these symptoms can happen with other conditions that aren't cancer, it's important to call your healthcare provider today to schedule an appointment if you're experiencing any of them.

### Do you have, or have you recently noticed, any of the following?

- New lump in the breast or underarm
- Thickening or swelling of part of the breast
- Irritation or dimpling of breast skin
- Redness or flaky skin in the nipple area or the breast
- Pulling in (retracting) of the nipple or pain in the nipple area
- Nipple discharge other than milk, including blood
- Any change in the size or shape of the breast
- Pain in any area of the breast

# Breast cancer: Are you at risk?

Take the quiz below to help evaluate some of your risks for breast cancer.

Are you at risk for breast cancer? Check yes or no for each statement below.	YES	NO
Are you a woman?		
Are you over age 50?		
Have you tested positive for a mutation in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes?		
Do you have a first-degree relative (e.g. mother, sister or daughter) who has been diagnosed with breast cancer?		
Do you have a personal history of breast cancer?		
Did you start menstruating early (before age 12)?		
Did you start menopause late (after age 55)?		
Have you had radiation therapy to the chest area?		
Have you never been pregnant, or did you have your first child after age 30?		
Have you taken combination hormone replacement therapy (estrogen and progestin)?		
Are you overweight or obese?		
Are you physically inactive?		
Do you drink alcohol?		

## Breast cancer risk assessment results

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the more times you answered “Yes” to the quiz, the greater your risk for developing breast cancer.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of your score, if you are age 40 or older, you should talk to your healthcare provider about when and how often to have a clinical breast exam and mammogram.

## Talking about your risk factors with your healthcare provider

Discuss your breast cancer risk with your provider. Anything that increases your chance of getting a disease is called a risk factor. Having a risk factor does not mean you will get cancer; not having risk factors doesn't mean that you won't get cancer. If you think you may be at risk, you should talk to your provider.



### Here are some questions to help get you started

- Am I at risk?
- Should I have a mammogram or other tests?
- What can I do to prevent breast cancer?
- How do you get breast cancer?
- What are the symptoms?
- If diagnosed with breast cancer, what are my treatment options?

# Breast cancer: Are you at risk?

## Detecting breast cancer

Two tests are commonly used by healthcare providers to screen for breast cancer:<sup>6</sup>

- **Mammogram.** A mammogram is an X-ray image of your breast. This test may find tumors that are too small to feel and may also find abnormal cells in the lining of a breast duct, which may become invasive cancer in some women.
- **Clinical breast exam (CBE).** A clinical breast exam is an exam of the breast by a doctor or other healthcare provider. The provider will carefully feel the breasts and under the arms for lumps or anything else that seems unusual.

You can also talk to your healthcare provider about performing a monthly self-exam.

## Next steps

Organize your history, talk to your healthcare provider and, if screening is right for you, don't delay. Remember, when breast cancer is found early, it may be easier to treat.<sup>6</sup>

## References

<sup>1</sup>National Cancer Institute

[www.cancer.gov/types/breast](http://www.cancer.gov/types/breast)

<sup>2</sup>American Cancer Society

[www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/risk-and-prevention/lifestyle-related-breast-cancer-risk-factors.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/risk-and-prevention/lifestyle-related-breast-cancer-risk-factors.html)

<sup>3</sup>American Cancer Society

[www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/understanding-a-breast-cancer-diagnosis/types-of-breast-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/understanding-a-breast-cancer-diagnosis/types-of-breast-cancer.html)

<sup>4</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic\\_info/symptoms.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/symptoms.htm)

<sup>5</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic\\_info/risk\\_factors.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/risk_factors.htm)

<sup>6</sup>National Cancer Institute

[www.cancer.gov/types/breast/patient/breast-screening-pdq](http://www.cancer.gov/types/breast/patient/breast-screening-pdq)

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