

Early Detection and Breast Cancer: What Every Woman Should Know

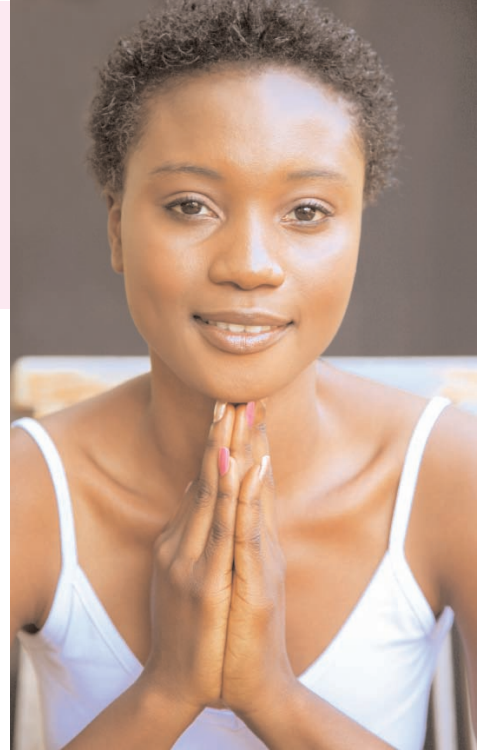
Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer among women in the United States. More than 182,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year. The chance of a woman having breast cancer sometime during her life is 1 in 8. **Early detection is key in the treatment of breast cancer.** There are steps you can take to detect breast cancer early when it is most treatable.

CancerCare recommends that every woman follow these screening guidelines:*

MAMMOGRAPHY The most important screening test for breast cancer is the mammogram. A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. It can detect breast cancer up to two years before the tumor can be felt by you or your doctor.

Women age 40 or older who are at average risk of breast cancer should have a mammogram once a year.

Women at high risk should have yearly mammograms along with an MRI starting at age 30. For more information, see “Risk Factors for Breast Cancer” on back.



TIPS FOR A BETTER MAMMOGRAM

- *Look for an FDA certificate.* The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issues a certificate to all mammography centers that meet high professional standards of safety and quality.
- *Get regular mammograms.* Work with your doctor to set up a schedule that is right for your age and situation.
- *Follow up on your test results.* Don't assume your results were normal. Call your doctor's office to confirm.
- *Try to have your mammogram at the same mammography center each year.* This way, your results can be compared from year to year.

CLINICAL BREAST EXAM (CBE) During a CBE, your doctor examines your breasts and the surrounding area for any possible signs of breast cancer. Your doctor checks for:

- Changes in the size or shape of your breasts
- Skin changes, including rashes, dimpling or redness
- Other abnormal changes, such as lumps or discharge from the nipple

Women in their 20s or 30s should have a CBE about every three years as part of a general health exam.

Women over 40 should have a CBE once a year.

**Screening recommendations and mammography tips were adapted from guidelines by the American Cancer Society.*

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BREAST SELF EXAM It is a good idea to get in the habit of doing monthly self-exams **starting at age 20**. Examining yourself on a regular basis lets you become familiar with your breasts so you will notice any changes that may occur.

Breast self-exams **should not replace regular mammograms and clinical breast exams**. To find out how to perform a breast self-exam, ask your doctor.



SOME RISK FACTORS FOR BREAST CANCER

The following are some of the known risk factors for breast cancer. However, most cases of breast cancer cannot be linked to a specific cause. Talk to your doctor about your specific risk.

Age: The chance of getting breast cancer increases as women age. Nearly 80 percent of breast cancers are found in women over the age of 50.

Personal history of breast cancer: A woman who has had breast cancer in one breast is at an increased risk of developing cancer in her other breast.

Family history of breast cancer: A woman has a higher risk of breast cancer if her mother, sister or daughter had breast cancer, especially at a young age (before 40). Having other relatives with breast cancer may also raise your risk.

Genetic factors: Women with certain genetic mutations, including changes to the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, are at higher risk of developing breast cancer during their lifetime. Other gene changes may raise breast cancer risk as well.

Childbearing and menstrual history: The older a woman is when she has her first child, the greater her risk of breast cancer. Also at higher risk are:

- Women who menstruate for the first time at an early age (before 12)
- Women who go through menopause late (after age 55)
- Women who've never had children

CancerCare Can Help

CancerCare's staff of professional oncology social workers can help you cope with a diagnosis of breast cancer. We offer individual counseling, support groups, education, practical help and referrals, and all our services are **completely free of charge**. To learn more about how we help, call us at **1-800-813-HOPE (4673)** or visit www.cancercares.org.

