

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS & PREVENTION

RECOMMENDED SCREENING AND EARLY DETECTION EXAMS

A cancer screening checks for cancer before a person has any symptoms to help detect cancer at an early stage. When abnormal tissue is found early, it may be easier to treat. Early detection is especially important with breast cancer. According to the American Institute for Cancer Research, if a tumor is detected while it is small and well-localized in the breast tissue, the five-year survival rate is 98 percent.

- A **breast self-exam** is the first line of defense because women often find breast cancer themselves. If you are age 20 or over, you should conduct a self-exam the week following your menstrual period. If you're no longer menstruating, examine yourself on the same day every month. This habit could save your life. Ask a health care professional to show you how, or visit [nationalbreastcancer.org/self-breast-exam](https://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/self-breast-exam). Consult your doctor right away if you notice any changes in your breasts.
- A **clinical breast exam** is conducted by a trained medical or health professional who inspects and feels the entire breast/chest area. A clinical breast exam is typically conducted during a woman's annual gynecological exam. Beginning at age 40, have a clinical breast exam every year.
- A **mammogram** is currently one of the most effective tools for early detection of breast cancer. A mammogram can discover tumors long before they can be felt in a physical examination. Mammography does not take the place of clinical or self-exams. Beginning at age 40, a mammogram may be performed annually if recommended by your doctor. Check your health care benefits plan for details.
- If you meet high-risk criteria for breast cancer, ask your doctor about a genetic assessment. A blood test can check for changes in the BRCA genes that may increase your chance of getting breast cancer. Check your health care benefits plan for details.



BREAST CANCER RISK FACTORS

Breast cancer occurs when abnormal cells grow out of control in one or both breasts. Anything that increases your chance of getting a disease is called a risk factor. Age and health history can affect the risk of developing breast cancer. Risk factors for breast cancer include the following:

- Being age 50 or older
- Onset of menstruation before age 12
- Onset of menopause after age 55
- Older age at first birth (after age 30) or never having given birth
- Personal history of breast cancer or benign (non-cancer) breast disease
- Family history of a mother, sister, daughter, or two or more close relatives (like cousins) with breast cancer
- Inherited genetic factors (BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes)
- History of treatment with radiation therapy to the breast or chest area
- Taking hormones such as estrogen and progesterone
- Drinking alcohol
- Being Caucasian
- Excess body fat
- Physical inactivity

KNOW THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

It's important to know the possible signs and symptoms of breast cancer. See your doctor right away if you notice any of these changes:

- A change in the way the breast feels. The most common symptom is a painless lump or thickening in the breast or underarm.
- A change in the way the breast looks. The skin on the breast may dimple or have an orange peel appearance, or there may be a change in the size or shape of the breast.
- A change in the nipple. It may turn in, or the skin around it may look scaly.
- A clear or bloody fluid that comes out of the nipple.

BREAST CANCER AND CANCER PREVENTION

Scientists now believe that roughly one-third of all cancer cases could be prevented through sensible dietary choices, maintaining a healthy body weight and keeping physically active every day. There are several known risk factors and protective factors for breast cancer. The expert report, "Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective," from the American Institute of Cancer Research (AICR) and the World Cancer Research Fund Global Network outlines the risk and protective factors that we can control to reduce the risk of developing cancer, including breast cancer. The evidence shows that we have more control over our risk for cancer than one might think. Here are some of the findings and recommendations from the report.

- **DIET** – Eat a healthy diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. A low-fat diet with limited red meat may lower your breast cancer risk.
- **WEIGHT** – Maintain a healthy weight throughout adulthood. There is convincing evidence that body fat is a cause of postmenopausal breast cancer. Maintain a healthy weight by choosing a healthy, mostly plant-based diet and enjoying daily physical activity.
- **ALCOHOL** – If you drink alcohol, do not drink more than one alcoholic drink a day. After menopause, even having one drink a day or less may increase the risk for breast cancer.
- **ACTIVITY** – Staying active may lower your breast cancer risk. Try to get 30 to 60 minutes of exercise at least five days a week. All types of activity – like walking, biking, swimming, vigorous housecleaning and manual labor – can help protect you against postmenopausal breast cancer.
- **BREASTFEEDING** – If you are planning to have children, consider breastfeeding. There is convincing evidence that breastfeeding protects against breast cancer.



SOY AND BREAST CANCER

Even though animal studies have shown mixed effect on breast cancer with soy supplements, studies in humans have not shown harm from eating soy foods. Moderate consumption of soy foods appears safe for both breast cancer survivors and the general population, and may even lower breast cancer risk. If you choose to include soy in your diet, research recommends getting it from your diet versus supplements, until more research is done. So, enjoy your occasional tofu stir-fry or tofu burger – they are unlikely to increase your risk of breast cancer and, on balance, are some of the healthier foods you can eat!

Your specific needs may vary according to your personal risk factors. Your doctor is always your best resource for determining if you're at an increased risk for breast cancer. If you have questions about your coverage, please call the toll-free Member Service number on your insurance identification card.