



# BREAST CANCER AWARENESS GUIDE

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# Breast Cancer Awareness

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS GUIDE | DIAGNOSIS

## Signs and Screenings

There are a number of ways doctors can test for breast abnormalities, including simple physical exams and family history assessments to X-rays and other radiation screenings to find a tumor, pinpoint a problem area or determine how far cancer has spread.

The testing will start with basic exams and mammograms. If your doctor finds anything abnormal in the regular screenings, she may order additional tests such as ultrasounds, MRIs, blood tests or a biopsy.

### SIGNS OF BREAST CANCER

Although cancer presents differently in different people, the National Cancer Institute listed a number of warning signs for which women should be on the alert and contact their doctor if these appear. They include: a lump or thickening in or near the breast or underarm; changes in a breast's size or shape; skin puckering or dimpling; a nipple turned inward; fluid coming from the nipple; or scaly, red or swollen skin.

### SELF-EXAMS

Checking yourself can be part of a healthy breast regimen. According to the NCI, self-exams have not been found to help reduce the number of deaths from breast cancer, but it can offer some benefit; many women find lumps on their own, though these frequently are not indicative of cancer.

The breast tissue can have cysts and other lumps. It's important to remember breast tissue changes during menstruation and menopause; pregnancy, aging and taking birth control all can cause the breasts to feel different.

### CLINICAL BREAST EXAMS

During an annual physical, your doctor will examine your breasts for lumps or other changes. She will



also feel around the breast and test the lymph nodes, which are one of the first places cancer spreads. As with self-exams, the breast tissue can change from year to year; your doctor will determine if further testing is needed. During this time, you can also talk about your family history with your doctor, which could be indicative of cancer risk.

### MAMMOGRAMS

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast, which can find tumors that can't be felt with physical exams. Mammograms can also find small deposits of calcium that may indicate breast cancer. Doctors also may use it after breast cancer has been found to determine how far it's spread. The medical community recommends regular mammograms for women age 40 and older.

# Breast Cancer Awareness

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS GUIDE | WHO'S AFFECTED

## Male Breast Cancer

It's rare, but men have breast tissue and can have breast cancer. Like breast cancer in women, early diagnosis plays a significant role in a good outcome. And like the disease in women, treatment generally includes surgery to remove the affected tissue, chemotherapy and radiation therapy.

### CAUSES

The Mayo Clinic reports that science is still unclear on the causes of male breast cancer.

We do know that everyone of all genders is born with some breast tissue, which consists of milk-producing glands known as lobules, ducts that move milk to the nipples, and fat. At puberty, women develop more breast tissue; men do not, but they retain what they were born with.

There is evidence that a family history of breast cancer can make men more likely to get the disease. Gene mutations, particularly in BRCA2, increase a man's risk of both breast and prostate cancer.

Other risk factors are older age; exposure to estrogen; a genetic syndrome known as Klinefelter's syndrome, in which boys are born with more than one copy of the X chromosome; liver and testicular disease; and obesity.

### TYPES

There are several types of male breast cancer, according to the Mayo Clinic. Cancer that begins in the milk ducts, or ductal carcinoma, is the most common type of male breast cancer. Lobular carcinoma, which is cancer that starts in the milk-producing glands, is rare, since men have very few milk-producing glands. Other types of male breast cancer are Paget's



disease, which affects the nipple, and inflammatory breast cancer.

### SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT

Symptoms of breast cancer in men may include a painless lump or thickening in the breast tissue, nipple discharge or changes to the nipple, such as redness, scaling or turning inward, or changes to the skin covering the breast.

Diagnosis and treatment for male breast cancer includes clinical breast exams, imaging tests that allow the doctor to identify problem areas and abnormalities or a biopsy, when a doctor extracts tissue from the suspicious area to test if it's cancer. Because male breast cancer is often hormone-related, hormone therapy may be part of a treatment regimen; surgical treatment could include a full mastectomy or removal of a few lymph nodes that would be the most likely place for cancer to spread.

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# EARLY DETECTION AND BETTER TREATMENT OPTIONS ARE IMPROVING THE CHANCES OF SURVIVING BREAST CANCER!



## According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation:

- In 2020, an estimated 276,480 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women in the U.S. as well as 48,530 new cases of non-invasive (in situ) breast cancer.
- 64% of breast cancer cases are diagnosed at a localized stage (there is no sign that the cancer has spread outside of the breast), for which the 5-year survival rate is 99%.
- This year, an estimated 42,170 women will die from breast cancer in the U.S.
- Although rare, men get breast cancer too. In 2020, an estimated 2,620 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year in the U.S. and approximately 520 will die.
- 1 in 8 women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime
- Breast cancer is the most common cancer in American women, except for skin cancers. It is estimated that in 2020, approximately 30% of all new women cancer diagnoses will be breast cancer.
- There are over 3.5 million breast cancer survivors in the United States.
- On average, every 2 minutes a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer in the United States.



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# Breast Cancer Awareness

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS GUIDE | HELPING HANDS

## Emotional Support

**B**reast cancer takes a huge toll on the body, but the diagnosis and treatment can also be incredibly difficult emotionally. Cancer is a scary diagnosis, with the questions of long-term effects and the likelihood of death, and treatment is hard, with chemotherapy and radiation causing other problems and making the patient sick in different ways.

**C**ancer treatment is also very involved; it can take over families' lives and be hard on spouses or partners, children and caregivers.

According to the Mayo Clinic, getting the necessary emotional support can make this frightening process easier to handle.

### WHILE UNDERGOING TREATMENT

Talk to your oncologist about cancer support groups in the area or ways to seek out support online. Cancer can be isolating, both because treatment makes patients so sick that going out in public is difficult, and it can also be difficult to feel a part of a group when feeling self-conscious about colostomy bags, a mastectomy, hair loss or worrying about your diagnosis.

You can also look into other ways to treat the side effects of cancer treatments.

Appropriate pain management can help you handle both the physical and emotional toll of cancer. You can speak to a therapist about overwhelming sadness, distress or anxiety. When you are physically able to, exercise or going about your normal routine as much as possible can make you feel better (though don't push yourself further than your body can handle).

### CANCER SURVIVORS

Finding out you're in remission is good news, but often cancer survivors are still left with an array of emotions and can benefit from sustained support.

The fear of recurrence is common, even years after treatment; the Mayo Clinic recommends acknowledging this fear and doing what you can to remain on

top of your health, including going to follow-up appointments and getting the recommended tests, talking to friends or family about your fears and keeping busy. By returning to your old hobbies or acquiring new ones, you will worry less about the future.

You may also experience depression, anxiety or difficulty handling stress. Exercise, rest and attending a support group for other cancer survivors.

If you need more help, talk to your doctor and consider asking for a referral to a counselor.



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# Breast Cancer Awareness

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS | SYMBOLS

## Pink Ribbon History

The pink ribbon has become a well-known symbol for breast cancer awareness and support. But how did ribbons become silent declarations of support? Why pink? Here's the scoop.

### RIBBONS AS SYMBOLS

Ribbons first became a tool to bring awareness and support to a cause in 1979 — when the wife of one of the prisoners of the Iran hostage crisis, Penny Laingen, decided to use a yellow ribbon to show support for her husband and the other hostages.

A decade later, Visual AIDS — an AIDS awareness and support group — employed a red ribbon on a national stage during the Tony Awards. Since then, many organizations have claimed their own unique ribbon color to signify support and awareness for their cause.

### A PEACHY PAST

The ribbon for breast cancer awareness got its start as peach colored, according to Pink Ribbon International — an initiative for breast cancer awareness and funding.

Charlotte Hayley, a breast cancer patient, introduced the peach ribbon by attaching it to cards saying, “The National Cancer Institute’s annual budget is 1.8 billion U.S. dollars, and only 5 percent goes to cancer prevention. Help us wake up our legislators and America by wearing this ribbon.”

Haley distributed thousands of these cards, and her message spread by word of mouth, but her efforts were strictly grassroots.

### THE MAKING OF AN ICON

The pink ribbon truly became established in 1991, after the cosmetics industry endorsed the symbol. This is also how the ribbon took on the pink hue it is known for today. The editor-in-chief of Self Magazine, who was working on a breast cancer awareness issue with Estee Lauder Cosmetics, sought to incorporate Haley’s ribbon, but Haley rejected the collaboration — stating that the magazine’s intent was “too commercial.”

Unable to use the original peach ribbon for legal reasons, the magazine changed the color to pink — and the rest is history.



Cancer affects millions of people across the globe, changing the lives not only of those diagnosed with the disease, but also those of their friends and families.

Questions often arise when individuals or loved ones are diagnosed with cancer, and one of the more common questions is, "How did this happen?" Many people who feel perfectly healthy are diagnosed with cancer every day, and that can create a sense of hopelessness among patients while also prompting them to wonder what they might have been able to do differently to avoid their disease.

The World Health Organization notes that cancer arises from the transformation of normal cells into tumor cells. That transformation is a multi-stage process that typically progresses from a precancerous lesion to a malignant tumor. Cancer researchers have long since determined that genetic factors play a role in the development of cancer. For example, the nonprofit organization BreastCancer.org notes that women with one first-degree relative, which includes sisters, mothers and daughters, who has had breast cancer are at twice the risk of developing breast cancer as women with no such connection. The risk for women with two first-degree relatives who have had breast cancer is five times higher than those with no such family history.

But the WHO notes that genetics are not the only contributing factor to cancer. In fact, the WHO says the interaction between genetic factors and these three categories of external agents can pave the way for the transformation of normal cells into tumorous ones.

- **Physical carcinogens:** Physical carcinogens include ultraviolet and ionizing radiation. The WHO notes that many people are exposed to natural sources of ionizing radiation such as soil, water and vegetation. But there are human-made sources, such as X-rays and medical devices, of ionizing radiation as well.

- **Chemical carcinogens:** Chemical carcinogens include asbestos, certain components of tobacco smoke, the food contaminant aflatoxin, and arsenic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that arsenic can enter the water supply from natural deposits in the earth or from industrial or agricultural pollution. The CDC urges people who get their water from a private well and suspect it might be tainted by arsenic to contact their local government to have their water tested.

- **Biological carcinogens:** Biological carcinogens include infections from certain viruses, bacteria or parasites. The virus hepatitis B, for example, has been shown to cause liver cancer.

Doctors may not be able to point to a single factor to determine the specific cause of an individual case of cancer. However, they are aware of various cancer-causing agents that greatly increase a person's risk of being diagnosed with this disease.

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