

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Take Charge and Minimize Your Risk!

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Breast Cancer is a disease in which malignant cancer cells form in the tissues of the breast. It is the second most common type of cancer in American women. It's less common in men, but 2700 cases of invasive cancer will be diagnosed in men this year. Though still considered a life-threatening disease, breast cancer does not have to be fatal. The key to surviving breast cancer is to detect it early, know the risk factors and avoid anything that could increase your risk.

Risk Factors



(<https://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/breast-cancer-facts>)

Age and health history can affect the risk of developing breast cancer, though these factors do not necessarily mean you will get breast cancer. Common health risk factors include:

- Beginning menstruation at an early age
- Older age at first birth or never having given birth
- A personal history of breast cancer or benign breast disease
- A family history of breast cancer

- Treatment with radiation therapy to the breast/chest
- Taking hormones such as estrogen and progesterone

Women who have an altered gene related to breast cancer and who have had breast cancer are at a higher risk at developing it again, and may have an increased risk of developing other cancers.

Decreasing Your Risks

The most important way to take action against breast cancer is with regular checkups with a qualified practitioner and frequent breast self-exams. At age 20, checking your breasts seven to 10 days after your menstrual cycle starts is best, and for post-menopausal women, checking your breasts at the same time each month is recommended. Another way to decrease your risk is maintaining a healthy low-fat diet with fresh vegetables, exercising regularly and minimizing alcohol intake. Lastly, if you are taking hormonal contraceptives (the patch, pill, IUD, vaginal ring) or undergoing hormone therapy at menopause, ask your doctor about the risks and find out if they are right for you.

Although many factors over the course of a lifetime can influence your contracting breast cancer, having control over your own health by taking every-day steps will help minimize your risks.

Source: <https://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/breast-cancer-facts>