



What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is a malignant (cancerous) tumor that starts from cells of the breast. A woman's breast is made up of lobules (glands that make milk), ducts (small tubes that connect lobules to nipple), fatty and connective tissue, blood vessels and lymph vessels. Most breast cancers begin in the ducts (ductal), some in the lobules (lobular) and the rest in other tissues.

How common is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women, except for non-melanoma skin cancers. It is the second-leading cause of cancer death in women, exceeded only by lung cancer. The chance that breast cancer will be responsible for a woman's death is about 1 in 33 (3 percent). In addition, the chance of developing invasive breast cancer at some time in a woman's life is about 1 in 8 (13.4 percent).

The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2006, some 212,920 new cases of invasive cancer will be diagnosed among women in the United States, causing approximately 40,410 deaths.

What causes breast cancer?

We do not know yet what exactly causes breast cancer, but we know there are risk factors that increase a person's chance of getting cancer. Being a woman is the main risk. A woman's hormones may also stimulate breast cancer growth. Age, genetic risk, family history, personal history, race and several other factors play into evaluating your risk. However, 70 percent of women who get breast cancer have absolutely no risk factors. Consult your doctor to learn more about your risks.

What are the signs and symptoms of breast cancer?

The most common sign is no sign, but breast cancer may also appear as a new lump or mass. A painless, hard mass that has irregular edges is more likely to be cancerous, but some cancers are tender, soft and rounded.

Other signs of breast cancer include a generalized swelling of part of a breast, skin irritation or dimpling, nipple pain or retraction (turning inward), redness or scaliness of the nipple or breast skin, or discharge other than breast milk. Sometimes a breast cancer can spread to underarm lymph nodes even before the original tumor in the breast tissue is large enough to be felt.

How is breast cancer found?

Mammograms, clinical breast exams and breast self-exams are the best ways to find breast cancer.

What is a mammogram?

Mammography is a simple X-ray of the breast that can detect cancers so small that even the most experienced examiner cannot feel them. The examination itself uses X-rays to view the breast, usually from two angles. To get the most accurate picture possible in each X-ray, a special device gently squeezes the breast. Although this may sound painful, it is only slightly uncomfortable and the length of time the breast is

compressed in just a few seconds.

On the day of your exam, it is best to wear a two-piece outfit. It is also best not to wear lotions, powders or deodorant when you go for your mammogram, as these can interfere with mammographic image quality. And you will therefore be asked to remove them prior to your exam.

How safe are they?

Mammography has been used on millions of women for over 25 years. Like all X-rays, it involves limited exposure to radiation; but the amount required is small. Because of advances in all areas of mammography, the radiation dose has been dramatically reduced.

How accurate is it?

Mammography has been used increasingly since 1960 and is constantly being improved. It is accurate about 90 percent of the time. And it's also why more and more doctors are using mammography to help diagnose breast cancer in its earliest, most treatable stages.

Who should get a mammogram?

Eventually, all women should get a mammogram. The American Cancer Society offers the following guidelines to women who are symptom-free:

- Women 20 and older should perform breast self-examinations every month.
- Women 20 to 39 should have a physician breast examination every three years, and women 40 and older should have one every year.
- Women 40 and older should have a mammogram every year, or more often for women at increased risk.

Why should I get a mammogram?

Studies have shown that mammography saves lives. The purpose of mammogram screenings is to find issues before they are problems. Ignoring the risk of breast cancer does not diminish it. The difference in quality and quantity of life in women whose cancers are detected before they cause symptoms, and those that aren't, is reason enough to have a mammogram.

Mammography, combined with physical examination, could reduce the breast cancer mortality rate by over 20-30 percent. But it is important to discuss your treatment with your doctor, understand their recommendations completely, and then act on them.

How can I learn more about breast cancer?

There are several national organizations and Web sites you can visit to learn more about breast cancer. A few of these sites are listed below:

American Cancer Society:
<http://www.cancer.org>

Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation:

<http://www.komen.org>

American Breast Cancer Foundation:

<http://www.natlbcc.org>

<http://www.breastcancer.org>

To schedule your mammogram today, please contact any one of the facilities we provide services to on [Our Locations](#) page.