

BREAST HEALTH

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH



*Compassionate care for
all stages of life*

Breast Cancer & Young Women

Many people think only older women get breast cancer. This is NOT true. Young women can and do get breast cancer. It is important that you learn the truth about breast cancer and know what to do if something in your breasts does not feel normal. When you know the truth, you can take charge of your breast health.

Facts you should know about Breast Cancer

- Nearly 13,000 cases of breast cancer in women under age 40 are diagnosed each year.
- Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women ages 15 to 39.
- Nearly 80 percent of young women diagnosed with breast cancer find their breast abnormality themselves.
- Young women are often diagnosed with more advanced breast cancer and/or more aggressive subtypes than older women.
- Race, ethnicity, language barriers and cultural beliefs may prevent some young women from understanding their personal risk of breast cancer.
- There are no effective breast cancer screening tools for women younger than 40 years old, so it is crucial that you are your own best health advocate.
- Breast cancer risk increases slightly for approximately 10 years after a first birth. After that, it drops below the risk of women who don't have children.

**MOST LUMPS ARE NOT
CANCEROUS, BUT IF YOU
FEEL ONE, HAVE A DOCTOR
CHECK IT OUT TO BE SURE.**

Common myths about Breast Cancer

**NOT
TRUE**

- Breast cancer can be prevented.
- Only women with a family history of breast cancer develop the disease. A woman's family history of breast cancer on her father's side does not affect her risk.
- If a woman is at high risk for breast cancer, there is little she can do.
- Mammograms cause breast cancer.
- Wearing an underwire bra or sleeping in a bra increases a woman's risk of getting breast cancer.
- All breast lumps are cancer.
- Breast cancer always comes in the form of a lump.
- Women with small breasts have less chance of getting breast cancer.
- Women with large or lumpy breasts have a higher risk of developing breast cancer.



Guarding your good health

Breast cancer cannot be prevented, but there are ways you can achieve an overall healthy lifestyle in mind, body and spirit and decrease your risk.

- Eat balanced meals with many fruits and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Get regular exercise.
- Support bone health through physical activity, but check with your doctor before starting any physical activities.
- Appropriate intake of vitamin D and calcium.
- Limit your alcohol use to no more than one glass a day.
- Get enough rest.
- Reduce stress.
- Pray, meditate or just find private time for yourself.
- Make time for enjoyable and fun activities.
- Do not smoke.

Risk factors for Breast Cancer

Risk factors include anything that increases your chance of developing breast cancer. There are some risk factors you can control and others you cannot.

Risk factors you CANNOT control

- The fact that you are a woman
- Getting older
- Family history of breast cancer
- Having breast cancer in the past
- Chest exposure to radiation when you were a child or teenager
- First menstrual period earlier than age 12

Risk factors that you CAN control

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Limit alcohol use
- Exercise regularly
- Have your first child before age 30, if possible
- Breastfeed, if possible

Know your breasts

It is important that you are familiar with your breasts and aware of the signs and symptoms of breast cancer. This way, you can tell your doctor right away if you notice any changes in your breasts.

Signs & Symptoms of breast cancer

- A lump or unusual thickening in the breast or underarm area
- A change in color or rash on the skin of the breast
- Unusual nipple discharge
- Swelling of all or part of the breast
- A change in size or shape of the breast
- Itchy, sore or scaling of the nipple
- Dimpling on breast skin or nipple turning inward
- Breast or nipple pain that does not go away

If you experience any of the above symptoms, consult your physician. If your concern is not taken seriously, you may have to insist on discussing whether further testing is appropriate. Ultrasound, mammography, MRI and/or biopsy can be used to investigate something suspicious.

Note: If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, normal changes to the breast and nipple may be more dramatic. But if you see something that concerns you, ask your doctor. Young women can be diagnosed with breast cancer while pregnant or nursing.

Know your family history

Most women with breast cancer do NOT have a family history of the disease. However, it is important to know your family history because it is possible for breast cancer to be passed down through your family line. This is called hereditary breast cancer, and the chance of inheriting a breast cancer-related gene mutation is the same (50%) from both your mother and father's side of the family.

Today, doctors know that many breast cancer-related genes, including BRCA1 or BRCA2, are linked to hereditary breast cancer. Mutations (alterations/changes) in these genes increase a woman's risk of developing breast cancer.

A family history of cancer (relatives on either side of your family diagnosed with cancer) may lead your doctor to suggest genetic testing to determine your risk for breast cancer.

If you don't understand information about your family medical history and/or genetic testing, ask questions until you do. With the right information, you and your doctor can create a breast cancer surveillance plan that is best for you.

What should I do if I find something suspicious?

First, see your primary care doctor or OB/GYN if you find something unusual. Though there are currently no effective screening tools for young women, there are diagnostic tools available if there is something suspicious. Ask your doctor about the following. And remember, if you still have concerns, get a second opinion.

Clinical Breast Exam (CBE)

This is when a doctor or appropriate medical professional checks your breasts for unusual changes by looking at and feeling your breasts and underarms. A young woman should be receiving CBEs as part of her regular gynecological care.

Mammography

This is a low-dose x-ray of the breasts, which is used to find breast cancer – most often in women over 45. Mammograms are not as good at finding cancers in young and/or dense breasts.

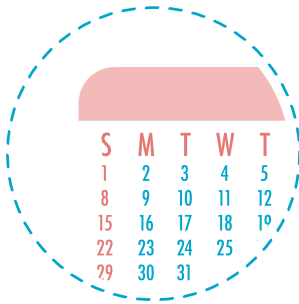
Breast Ultrasound

This is a scan of the breast that uses sound waves to produce images of the insides of the breasts.

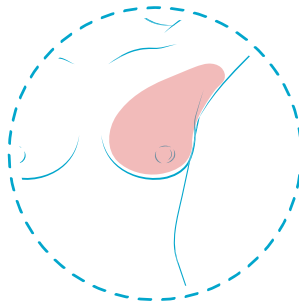
Breast MRI

This is a scan of the breasts that uses magnets and radio waves to produce images of the inside of the body. It can be extremely useful for women with dense breasts.

BREAST SELF EXAMINATION



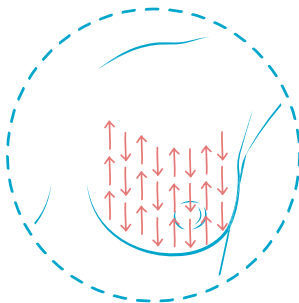
**ONCE A MONTH,
2-3 DAYS AFTER PERIODS**



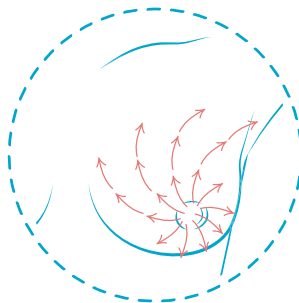
**EXAMINE BREAST AND ARMPIT
WITH RAISED ARM**



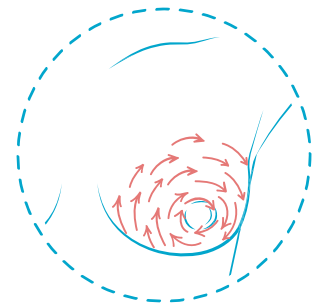
**USE FINGERPADS WITH
MASSAGE OIL OR SHOWER GEL**



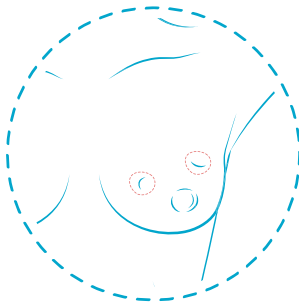
UP AND DOWN



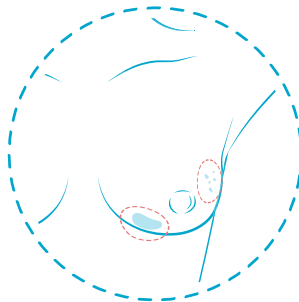
WEDGES



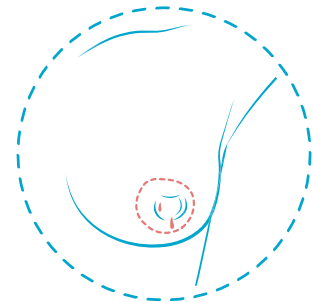
CIRCLES



**EXAMINE BREASTS IN THE MIRROR
FOR LUMPS OR SKIN DIMPLING...**



**...CHANGE IN SKIN COLOR
OR TEXTURE...**



**...NIPPLE DEFORMATION,
COLOR CHANGE OR LEAKS OF ANY FLUID**



*Compassionate care for
all stages of life*