

About Breast Cancer

Estimated new cases and deaths from breast cancer
in the United States in 2017

New Cases: 252,710 Females / 2,470 Males

Deaths: 40,610 Females / 460 Males

To prevent new cancers from starting, scientists look at risk factors and protective factors. Anything that increases your chance of developing cancer is called a cancer risk factor; anything that decreases your chance of developing cancer is called a cancer protective factor.

Risk Factors

- Estrogen
- Hormone replacement
- Radiation therapy to the chest
- Being overweight or obese after menopause
- Lack of physical activity
- Drinking alcohol
- Inherited Risk

Protective Factors

Exercise: Exercising four or more hours a week may decrease hormone levels.

Estrogen: Decreasing the length of time a woman's breast tissue is exposed to estrogen may help prevent breast cancer. Exposure to estrogen is reduced in the following ways:

Pregnancy: Estrogen levels are lower during pregnancy.

Breast Feeding: Estrogen levels remain low while a woman is breast feeding.

Ovarian ablation: Removal of one or more of the ovaries which make estrogen.

Late menstruation; menstrual periods at age 14 or older.

Early menopause: Estrogen levels decrease with menopause.

Selective estrogen receptor modulators are drugs that act like estrogen on some tissues in the body, but block the effect of estrogen on other tissues.

Prophylactic mastectomy:

The removal of both breasts when there are no signs of cancer.

Prophylactic oophorectomy:

The removal of both ovaries when there are no signs of cancer.

Fenretinide:

A type of vitamin A called a retinoid. When given to premenopausal women who have a history of breast cancer, fenretinide may lower the risk of forming a new breast cancer.

What you should do

Screening mammogram:

Women in their 40s and older should have mammograms every 1 to 2 years.

Clinical Breast Exams:

During a clinical breast exam, your health care provider checks your breasts.

Breast Self Exams:

Perform monthly breast self-exams to check for any changes in your breasts. Breast self-exams cannot replace regular screening mammograms and clinical breast exams.