

BREAST CANCER PREVENTION

Prevention begins with reducing your risk.

Some risk factors can't be changed:

Gender. Being a woman is the main risk factor for developing breast cancer.

Age. Your risk increases as you get older. Three out of four breast cancers are found in women older than 50.

Family history and genes. Some people inherit a tendency to get breast cancer. Your risk is higher if your mother or a sister had breast cancer before age 50.

Previous breast cancer. If you have had breast cancer in one breast, you are 3 to 4 times more likely to develop cancer in the other breast.

Menstrual periods. Your risk is higher if your periods started early (before age 12) or ended later.



Some risk factors can be changed:

Breast feeding. Breast feeding babies may decrease cancer risk. The longer you breast feed your baby the lower your risk. Breast feeding is also good for your baby!

Alcohol. Drinking alcohol increases your risk for breast cancer. Limit yourself to no more than 1 drink per day.

Overweight. Being overweight increases your risk. Work with your doctor to reach a healthy weight.

Physical activity. Being physically active decreases your risk. Try to do at least 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity on 5 or more days of each week.

Taking hormones. The use of certain hormone medications is safe and effective to relieve some of the uncomfortable symptoms of menopause (hot flashes). But, they should not be taken to prevent osteoporosis or heart disease. This may increase your risk of breast cancer. Talk with your doctor for more information.

What else can you do to prevent breast cancer?

Women at very high risk for breast cancer might benefit from taking tamoxifen, a medication shown to prevent breast cancer. But this medication has significant side effects and can cause serious harms like blood clots, abnormal bleeding from the uterus, and, in some cases, cancer of the uterus. Together, you and your doctor can decide whether tamoxifen is a good option for you.