

Just the Facts...

Breast Cancer

What is Breast Cancer?

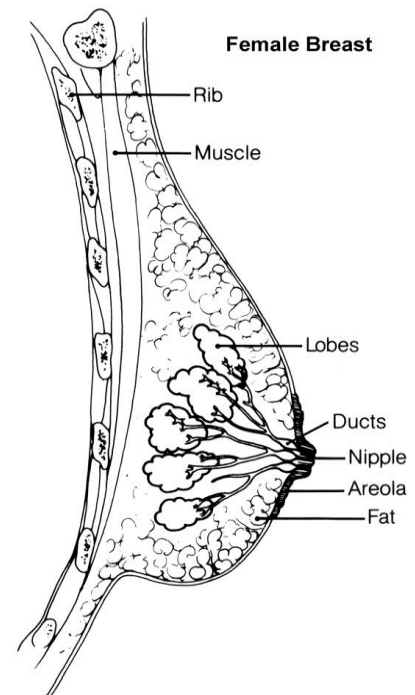
Breast cancer is a malignant (cancerous) tumor that starts from cells of the breast. It is second most common cause of death among women next to lung cancer. Breast cancer has a high cure rate when detected early, around 90%.

Anatomy of the Breast

The breast is made up of lobes, ducts, tissue, blood vessels, and lymph (limf) vessels. Lobes are glands that produce milk. Ducts are the tubes that connect the lobes to the nipple. Lymph vessels are veins that carry the fluid of your immune system to lymph nodes which are under the arm.

Risk factors

- being female
- increased age
- family history
- having no children
- first child after age 30
- early start of menstruation (before 12)
- late menopause (after 55)
- high fat diet



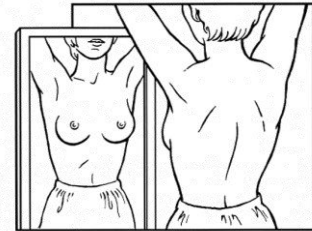
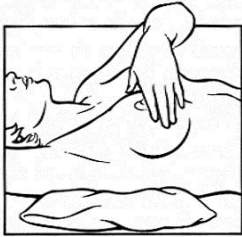
Prevention

There is no definite way to prevent breast cancer. Early detection gives women more treatment options; and can save the breast. The three early detection techniques are: breast self-examination (BSE), physician's examination and mammography. Women can do their own BSE. A mammogram is an x-ray of the breasts. It is done yearly. It detects cancer when it is too small to be felt.

Steps in Performing Breast Self-Examination (BSE)

Do a BSE monthly, 7-10 days after menstrual period. If no longer having periods, pick a date once a month that will be remembered. Do BSE in all three positions. Breast tissue may feel different in each of these positions.

- Lying down
- In the shower or tub (with soapy hands)
- In front of a mirror, look for any dimpling of the skin, changes in the nipple, redness, or swelling.



BSE Technique

Use wedge, circular or strip pattern to feel for lumps.

- Feel the underarm and around collarbone for lumps.
- Use three middle fingers. Keep them **flat**.
- Apply pressure firmly.
- Feel nipple. Press gently to check for discharge.
- Compare the right and left breasts. If something “different” is felt in one breast, examine the same area of the other breast. If it feels the same, it is probably normal.

Women who are pregnant, breast-feeding, or have had breast surgery also need to do breast self-examinations.

Signs and symptoms

- Lump or thickening
- Change in the size or shape of the breast
- Nipple discharge
- Dimpling or scaling of the skin or nipple

Signs of breast changes can be for reasons other than breast cancer. Many breast changes are hormone-related.

Diagnosis: The doctor may order an ultrasound and/or a diagnostic mammogram that takes specialized views of the breast and biopsy are to tell whether or not an abnormal growth is cancer.

Treatment: Treatment options include surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy. The type of treatment is different for each person and is depending on how early a lump is detected.

References:

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

The Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, <http://www.breastcancerinfo.com>

American Institute for Cancer Research, <http://www.aicr.org>

National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service, www.nci.nih.gov

National Library of Medicine, Medline Plus, www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/

