



The ABCs of Breast Health

According to the Centers for Disease Control, breast cancer is the most common cancer in women. All women are at risk for breast cancer. One out of eight women in the United States develops breast cancer. Although you cannot prevent breast cancer, following the ABCs of breast health can lower your risk.

The ABCs of breast health

- **A**nnual Mammogram
- **B**reast Awareness
- **C**linical Breast Exam

The ABCs are important because

- Doctors can find changes early
- Doctors can find out quickly if the changes are due to cancer or not
- Early detection increases the chance of cure

Mammograms

Mammograms are quick, easy and safe x-rays. We can see things on a mammogram that we cannot feel. They can find problems early. The American Cancer Society advises yearly mammograms after age 40.

Why don't women get mammograms?

- They are afraid it will hurt. There are ways to minimize the discomfort, such as taking medicine before the test and asking the technician to use hand controls.
- They are afraid mammograms are not safe. The amount of radiation used is like getting a dental x-ray.
- Many women don't want to know if there is something wrong. Eighty percent of breast changes are not cancer. If it is cancer, you've caught it early.

Clinical Breast Exam

A doctor, nurse or midwife does the clinical breast exam. Women over the age of 40 should have an exam every year. If you are in your 20s or 30s, have an exam every 3 years.

A good breast exam has the following parts:

- A personal health history
- An exam of your breast when you are standing
- An exam of the whole breast
- A talk about breast health
- A lesson on how to examine your breasts

Breast Awareness

Learn how your breasts usually look and feel. Do breast self exams and look for lumps, thickness and other changes. If you think something is not right, see your doctor. Most breast lumps are not cancer.

What to look for:

- The breasts look different than usual, or different from each other
- A swelling or thickening in part of the breast
- A lump in the breast or underarm
- Skin irritation or dimpling
- Nipple pain or the nipple turned inward
- Redness or scaliness
- A nipple discharge other than breast milk

Risks of developing breast cancer

- **Risks you cannot change**
 - Age (the older you get, the greater the risk)
 - Gender (women are more likely to get breast cancer, but men can get it, too)
 - You have had cancer
 - Your mother or sister had breast cancer
 - You had your period early
 - You went into menopause late
 - You had your first child after the age of thirty
- **Although you cannot prevent cancer, you can lower your risk by:**
 - Keeping a healthy weight
 - Exercising regularly
 - Eating low fat foods
 - Limiting alcohol
 - Never smoking
 - Breastfeeding your babies

What *doesn't* increase the risk of breast cancer

- Abortion
- Antiperspirants/deodorants
- Bras/underwires
- Breast implants
- Eating meat
- Hair dyes
- Stress
- If you knock or hurt your breast

Remember the ABCs of breast health

- **A**nnual mammogram
- **B**reast Awareness
- **C**linical Breast Exam