

BREAST CANCER

How to spot the signs and symptoms
and reduce your risk

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Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK. Around 8 in 10 breast cancer cases are in women aged 50 and over. Men can also be diagnosed with breast cancer but it is rare.

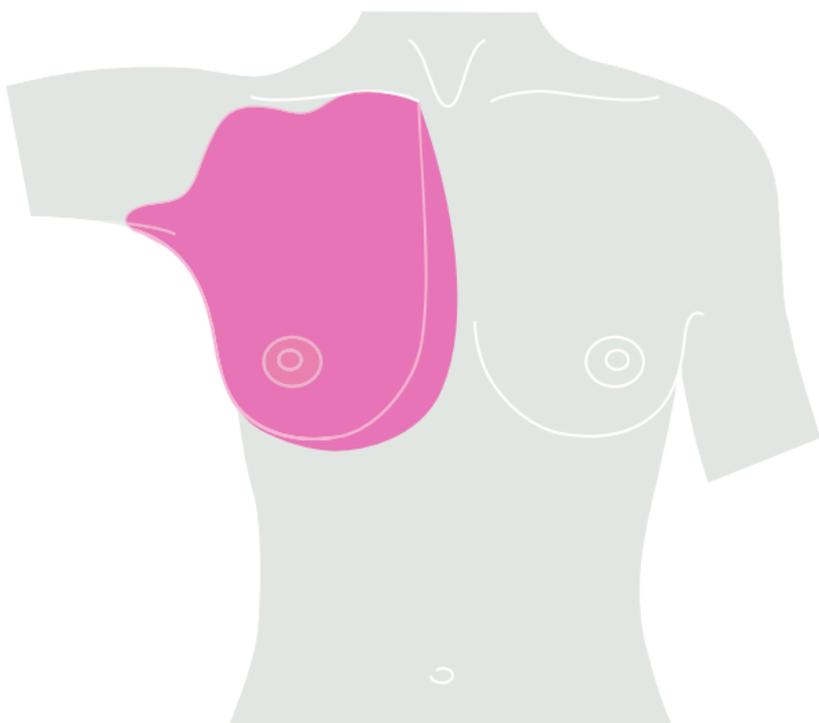
More women are surviving breast cancer than ever before, thanks to earlier detection and better treatments.

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- In this leaflet you can find out about:**
- how to reduce the risk of breast cancer
 - the signs and symptoms to look out for
 - breast cancer screening.

The breast

Breast cancer can develop in the breast, the armpit or the upper chest.



Early detection saves lives

Be 'breast aware':

- know what is normal for you
- look at and feel your breasts
- know what changes to look for
- see your doctor about any unusual changes.

Your breasts may look or feel different depending on the time of the month and your stage of life. By getting to know what your breasts normally look and feel like, you will be more likely to spot any new or unusual changes. You don't need to check yourself in a set way or at a certain time.

There's no right or wrong way to do it – look at and feel them however works best for you.

What changes should I look for?

Being breast aware and knowing what is normal for you will help you notice if anything changes. Most changes are not caused by cancer, but it is very important to report anything unusual to your doctor.

If you notice any of these symptoms get them checked out:

- a change in the size, shape or feel of a breast
- a new lump or thickening in a breast or armpit
- skin changes such as puckering, dimpling, a rash or redness of the skin
- fluid leaking from a nipple in a woman who isn't pregnant or breastfeeding
- changes in the position of a nipple
- pain in a breast.

If you notice any of these or any other new or unusual changes to your breasts, see your doctor.

How can you reduce your risk?



Weight

Being overweight or obese after the menopause increases the risk of breast cancer. Try to stay a healthy weight by enjoying a healthy, balanced diet and staying active.



Alcohol

Regularly drinking even small amounts of alcohol can increase the risk of breast cancer. The more you cut down on alcohol, the more you can reduce the risk.



Physical activity

Being physically active reduces the risk of breast cancer. Try to do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity 5 times a week. You can break this up into smaller chunks - even 10 minutes at a time adds up.

Moderate activity is any movement that makes you feel warm and slightly out of breath - everyday things like gardening and walking can count.



Smoking

Some research suggests that smoking increases the risk of breast cancer.

What else affects your risk?

- **Age**

The risk of developing breast cancer goes up with age. The older you are, the bigger the risk of developing the disease. Around 8 in 10 cancers are in women aged 50 and over.

- **Hormones and having children**

Taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT) increases the risk of breast cancer. Oral contraceptives (or the Pill) can also slightly increase the risk of breast (and cervical) cancers but decreases the risk of ovarian and womb cancers. If you are considering starting or stopping HRT or the Pill, or if you have any concerns, see your doctor.

The earlier a woman has children, the more children she has and the longer she breastfeeds, can all lower the chances of developing breast cancer.

- **Personal or family history**

Women with blood relatives who've had breast or ovarian cancer may have a higher risk of developing the disease. The risk increases with the number of relatives diagnosed, especially if they are close (such as your mother or sister).

But most breast cancers occur in women with no family history. Women who've had some types of cancer before also have a higher risk of developing breast cancer. If you are worried about your risk, speak to your doctor.

Breast screening

Breast screening uses x-rays to look at the breasts (mammography). Women aged 50 to 70 are offered screening every 3 years. In England, this is being extended to women aged 47 to 73. All women over 70 are entitled to breast screening, but aren't routinely invited. To make an appointment, talk to your GP or breast screening unit.

Breast screening aims to find cancers at an early stage when they are too small for you to see or feel. When breast cancer is found at an early stage, there is a very good chance of successful treatment. But, as well as picking up cancers that need treating, it can also find cancers that would not have caused any problems in a woman's lifetime. This means that some women will receive treatment they don't need.

Whether or not to go for screening is your choice. You should read the information sent with your screening invitation to help you decide.

Even if you have regular screening it's still important to go to your doctor if you notice any unusual changes to your breasts.

Further information

You can find out more about cancer at www.cruk.org/about-cancer

Find out more about our health messages at www.cruk.org/health

For more about the signs and symptoms of cancer visit www.spotcancerearly.com

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our information nurses on freephone **0808 800 4040**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

All our leaflets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. They are reviewed by independent experts and updated regularly. You can order our full range of leaflets free online at www.cruk.org/leaflets

About Cancer Research UK

We pioneer life-saving research to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. From our volunteers and supporters to our scientists, doctors and nurses, we're all here to save more lives and prevent, control and cure all cancers.

Together we will beat cancer sooner.

If you would like to support our work, call **0300 123 1861** or visit our website www.cruk.org