



Breast Cancer Awareness

What Is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer is a disease in which cells in the breast grow and multiply abnormally. This can happen if the genes in a cell that control cell growth no longer work properly. As a result, the cell divides uncontrollably and may form a tumor. You may be able to feel it as a lump under the skin, or you may not realize it's there at all until it's found on an imaging test, such as a mammogram (breast x-ray).

What Are the Symptoms of Breast Cancer?

Many breast cancers are discovered through routine breast screening exams such as mammograms, even when a woman has no other signs of disease. However, on your own, you may notice symptoms that could be suspicious. See your doctor right away if you have any of these conditions:

- A lump or thickness in or near the breast or under the arm.
- Unexplained swelling or shrinkage of the breast, particularly on one side only.
- Dimpling or puckering of the breast.
- Nipple discharge (fluid) other than breast milk that occurs without squeezing the nipple.
- Breast skin changes, such as redness, flaking, thickening, or pitting that looks like the skin of an orange.
- A nipple that becomes sunken (inverted), red, thick, or scaly.

Am I at Risk for Getting Breast Cancer?

Your risk for breast cancer rises as you get older. About 80 percent of breast cancers are found in women over age 50 — many of whom have no other known risk factors for the disease.

Although you're two to three times more likely to get breast cancer if you have a strong family history of the disease, only 5 to 10 percent of breast cancers are inherited, meaning that they are linked to gene mutations passed down in families, such as the BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations. Several other risk factors may slightly boost your chances of getting breast cancer.

When Should You Be Screened?

Women age 25 and older:

- Practice breast self-awareness.
- Begin yearly clinical breast exams by a doctor.

Women age 40 and older:

- Begin yearly mammograms.
- Ultrasound may be recommended for women with dense breast tissue.

Women with a family history of breast cancer:

- Begin yearly imaging exams ten years before the age of the earliest diagnosis in your immediate family, but not earlier than age 25 or later than age 40.
- Consider additional screenings exams.

If you have any questions about when you should start having mammograms, you should talk to your doctor. If you think you are at increased risk of getting breast cancer, you can make an appointment to see one of our specialists.

Did You Know?

- Mammography has helped reduce breast cancer mortality in the United States by **40%**.
- A woman is diagnosed with breast cancer **every 2 minutes**.
- **3 out of 4 women** who are diagnosed with breast cancer have no family history of the disease and are not considered at a high risk for developing it.
- **1 in 8 women** will be diagnosed with breast cancer.
- **1 in 6** breast cancers occurs in women ages 40 to 49.
- The NYCDCC Welfare Fund has a partnership with MSK through MSK Direct, which offers guided access and **personalized support**.

To schedule your mammogram appointment at any of our locations, call the NYCDCC Welfare Fund dedicated phone line at **833-786-3368** or **646-449-1541**.

For more information, visit mskcc.org/mammogram.

Information courtesy of mskcc.org.