

Breast Health

Other than skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common type of cancer among women in the U.S. More than 207,090 women are diagnosed with breast cancer each year. On average 13% of women get breast cancer in the U.S. However, the death rates have decreased since the 1990s.

Any woman can get breast cancer. The chance of having breast cancer increases as a woman gets older, with most breast cancers occurring in women who are 50 or older.

There are preventive steps every woman can take. Studies now show that a woman may help protect herself from breast cancer by maintaining her best body weight, exercising regularly, and not drinking alcohol or drinking it only moderately.

The best way to fight breast cancer is to find it early. Early detection gives a woman the best chance of getting well and living a full life.

Medical experts recommend that women take these steps to good breast health:

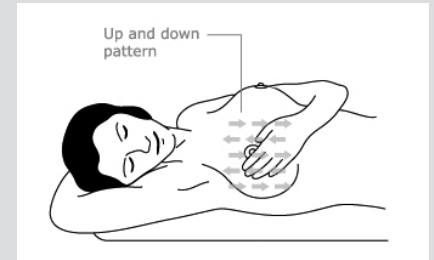
- Starting at age 20 learn to perform a breast self-exam (BSE) and do it every month. That way you will get to know what your breasts feel like and can tell if there has been a change. Ask your healthcare provider to show you how to check your breasts, or visit www.komen.org or www.cancer.org/breastcancer.
- See your health care provider for a breast exam. Women under age 40 should get an exam every 3 years. Women 40 and older should have a breast exam every year.
- Get mammograms regularly, beginning at age 40. A mammogram is an X-ray picture of the breast. It can find breast cancer that is too small to feel.
- Cancer can show up at any time—so one mammogram is not enough. Women age 40 and older should have a mammogram every year.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about the best schedule of breast exams and mammograms for you. You may need to have these check-ups more often, or begin them at a younger age, if your chance of getting breast cancer is higher than average—for example, if someone in your family has had breast cancer.
- See your healthcare provider right away if you find a lump or see other changes in your breast—for example, a rash or nipple discharge.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

BreastCancer.org, (866) 346-3228, www.breastcancer.org
Breast Cancer Recovery Foundation, (888) 821-1140, www.bcrfcure.org
Susan G. Komen Foundation, (877) 465-6636, www.komen.org

One way to self examine your breasts

Lie on your back with a pillow or folded towel under your right shoulder:



1. Place your right hand behind your head.
2. Examine every part of your right breast:
 - Use the pads of the three middle fingers of your left hand to feel for lumps, bumps, or thickening.
 - Move from spot to spot on your breast using a straight up-and-down pattern.
 - Press each spot using a small, circular motion.
 - Use three levels of pressure in each spot — light, for the breast tissue near the surface, medium, for the tissue underneath, and firm, for the tissue that is closest to the ribs.
3. Now switch positions and feel the left breast with your right hand, making sure to examine all parts of the breast using the up-and-down pattern.

Try to give yourself a self breast exam at least once a month. For more information on self breast exams, visit www.cancer.org/breastcancer.