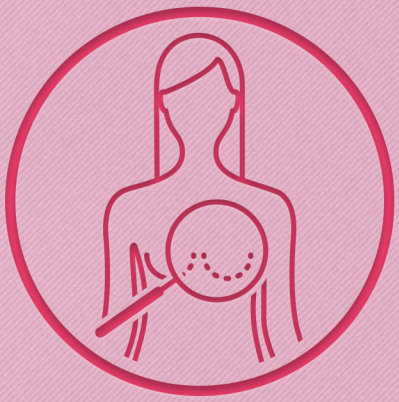

What Every Woman Needs to Know about Breast Care

NATIONAL BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION, INC.®

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YOU HAVE RECEIVED THIS EBOOK BECAUSE WE CARE ABOUT YOU.

By using this eBook and reading about breast health, you will find out:

- What the different types of breast cancer screenings are
- When to perform and schedule screenings for breast cancer
- How to assess your risk
- How to prepare for a mammogram
- What resources are available if you are unable to afford these life-saving screenings

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. However, with early detection and treatment, you can greatly improve your chance of survival. We have created this resource to empower you with the tools and information you need to take charge of your health.

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Your Breast Health Plan

3 Steps to Early Detection

Early detection means finding the cancer before it spreads. Breast cancer cannot be prevented, but early detection provides the greatest possibility of successful treatment. By following these three steps, you will help increase your chance of detecting breast cancer early.

1. BREAST SELF-AWARENESS

Breast self-awareness can help you become familiar with how your breasts normally look and feel. Knowing this will help you identify any changes in your breasts that should be reported to your health care professional promptly. If you find a lump, schedule an appointment with your doctor, but don't panic – most lumps are not cancer.

Changes to look for include:

- A lump or thickening in or near the breast or in the underarm area
- A change in the size or shape of the breast
- Dimpling or puckering in the skin of the breast
- A nipple turned inward into the breast
- Discharge (fluid) from the nipple
- Scaly, red, or swollen skin on the breast, nipple, or areola (the dark area of skin at the center of the breast)

You should see your health care provider about any of these symptoms. Often these symptoms are not due to cancer, but if you notice any changes in your body, tell your health care provider immediately so that the problems can be diagnosed and treated.

2. WELL-WOMAN EXAM

It is recommended that women visit their family physician or gynecologist each year for a Well-Woman Exam. In addition to a routine pelvic exam and pap smear, the doctor may perform a brief breast exam to check for abnormalities.

The Well-Woman Exam is a great opportunity for you to discuss with your health care provider any questions or concerns you have regarding your breast health. For example, your doctor may help you to determine the most appropriate personalized frequency for your early detection steps.

3. MAMMOGRAM

In its early stages, breast cancer doesn't usually cause symptoms. NBCF recommends that women ages 40 and older get a mammogram every year. A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. It is a safe way to detect cancerous tumors and other abnormal breast conditions, and women who have screening mammograms have a lower chance of dying from breast cancer than women who do not have screening mammograms.

Mammograms can detect cancer or other problems before a lump becomes large enough to be detected by touch. They provide an effective way to find breast cancer in its early stages when treatment is usually the most successful. Mammograms are considered safe, quick, and relatively painless.

HEALTHY HABITS

Leading a healthy lifestyle is recommended to protect your overall health and may help reduce your risk for certain cancers. Here are a few tips to follow:

- Eat five servings or more of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Get regular physical activity.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Limit alcohol intake to no more than one drink per day.
- Do not smoke. Or, quit smoking.

Scheduling Exams

While living a healthy life can help reduce your risk for cancer, breast cancer cannot be prevented and can occur at any age. Detecting breast cancer at an early stage, when treatment is more likely to be successful still provides the best hope for survival. This is why it is so important for you to schedule regular exams. Below you will find some general guidelines for breast cancer early detection methods. You should always consult with your doctor to create a screening schedule that is most appropriate for you.

EXAM	AGE	FREQUENCY
Breast Self-Awareness	18+	Regularly/Monthly
Well-Woman Exam	21+	Yearly
Mammogram	40+	Yearly

Assessing Your Personal Risk

A risk factor is a characteristic that increases the likelihood of developing breast cancer.

I am a woman aged 40 or above:

☐ Yes ☐ No

I have been previously diagnosed with breast cancer or ovarian cancer:

☐ Yes ☐ No

My mother, sister, and/or daughter has been diagnosed with breast cancer:

☐ Yes ☐ No

I have tested positive for a gene mutation that is associated with higher risk of breast cancer (i.e. BRCA1 or BRCA2):

☐ Yes ☐ No

My mother, sister, and/or daughter has tested positive for a gene mutation that is associated with higher risk of breast cancer (i.e. BRCA1 or BRCA2):

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered yes to any of these questions, please talk with your doctor about any concerns you have, including whether genetic testing may be right for you. For more information about the gene mutations that may increase your risk of breast cancer, visit NBCF.org/breast-cancer-genetics

We also encourage you to explore the National Cancer Institute's Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool available at Cancer.gov/BCRiskTool

Where to Get a Mammogram

Free or low-cost mammograms are available in many parts of the country. Below is information that can help you get a free mammogram if you qualify.

WHO TO TALK TO:

Many facilities have nurse or patient navigators who will help you obtain and complete the forms you need to receive a free or low-cost mammogram. Even if you do not have documentation, there is help available. A patient navigator can help you understand your options.

RESOURCES

National Mammography Program

nbcf.org/national-mammography-program

National Breast Cancer Foundation's National Mammography Program (NMP) provides funding to facilities across the U.S. to provide free or low-cost mammograms for women in need.

National Breast & Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program

cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp

CDC's National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP) provides access to breast and cervical cancer screening services to women in need in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The National Cancer Institute

cancer.gov

The National Cancer Institute can direct you to a local resource for low-cost mammograms. You can call them at 1.800.422.6237. Be sure to have your zip code ready.

Even if you do not have documentation, there is help available.

Preparing for Your Appointment

Questions to Ask Before a Mammogram

Before you get a mammogram, you may want to ask your health care provider the following questions:

What should I do to prepare for my mammogram?

Who will receive my mammogram report? Can you send it to my other doctors?

How long will the mammogram take?

Do you have my previous mammogram results?

When will I learn about the results?

Who will notify me of my results?

What happens if the mammogram shows something abnormal?

Will I have to pay anything for a mammogram?

What papers do I need to bring to see if I qualify for a free mammogram?

Symptom Checklist & Medical History

Complete this checklist if you have noticed any changes in your breasts. This will help you discuss the changes with your health care provider.

I have noticed these breast changes:

A lump or thickening in or near the breast or in the underarm area

☐ Left Breast ☐ Right Breast

A change in the size or shape of the breast

☐ Left Breast ☐ Right Breast

Dimpling or puckering in the skin of the breast

☐ Left Breast ☐ Right Breast

A nipple turned inward into the breast

☐ Left Breast ☐ Right Breast

Discharge (fluid) from the nipple

☐ Left Breast ☐ Right Breast

Scaly, red, or swollen skin on the breast, nipple, or areola (the dark area of skin at the center of the breast)

☐ Left Breast ☐ Right Breast

Other changes:

If you noticed any changes in your breast, this is the information you should discuss with your health care provider:

These are the breast changes or problems I have noticed:

This is what the breast change looks or feels like: (Is the lump hard or soft? Does your breast feel tender or swollen? How big is the lump? What color is the nipple discharge?)

This is where the breast change is: (What part of the breast feels different? Do both breasts feel different or only one?)

This is when I first noticed the breast change:

Since then, this is the change I've noticed: (Has it stayed the same or gotten worse?)

Share your personal medical history:

I've had these breast problems in the past:

These are the breast exams and tests that I have had:

My last mammogram was on this date:

My last menstrual period began on this date:

Right now, I:

- ☐ Have breast implants
- ☐ Am pregnant
- ☐ Am breastfeeding

I've had this type of cancer before:

I have tested positive for a mutation in the BRCA1 or BRCA 2 genes.
☐ Yes ☐ No

Share your family medical history:

My family members have had these breast problems or diseases:

These family members had breast cancer:

They were this age when they were diagnosed with breast cancer:

One (or more) of my family members has tested positive for a mutation in the BRCA1 or BRCA 2 genes.
☐ Yes ☐ No

Preparing for a Mammogram

If you and your doctor have determined you need a mammogram, based on your age and personal risk factors, do not put off this important screening. Here are the things you should do before, on the day of, during, and after your mammogram to help make the process easier and more effective.

BEFORE YOUR MAMMOGRAM

- Schedule your mammogram a few days after your menstrual cycle. This is when your breasts are least sensitive.
- If you need access to a free or low-cost mammogram, NBCF can help. Refer to "WHERE TO GET A FREE MAMMOGRAM" in this guide to learn more.
- Gather the below documents to take with you on the day of your appointment:
  - ☐ Proof of address
  - ☐ Proof of ID
  - ☐ Household income information
  - ☐ A list of where and when you have had any previous mammograms, as well as the results of those mammograms

THE DAY OF YOUR MAMMOGRAM

- Do not use any deodorant, lotion, cream or powder on your underarms or breasts. These will sometimes interfere with the mammogram reading.
- Provide your doctor with the documents you gathered.
- Provide your doctor with the symptom checklist.
- Describe any breast symptoms or problems you are having.
- Take this journal with you to help you ask questions and take notes.

DURING YOUR MAMMOGRAM

Try to relax your entire body. During your mammogram, you will likely feel pressure for a few brief moments. While mammograms can be uncomfortable, they should not be painful for most women.

AFTER YOUR MAMMOGRAM

- If you do not hear from your health care professional within 10 days, consult him or her to ask for your results.
- If your mammogram results are normal, be sure to ask your health care provider when he or she feels that you should have your next mammogram, based on your age and family history.
- Have your doctor help you answer this: "My next mammogram is needed on ____/____/____." If possible, schedule this appointment before you leave the doctor's office.

Abnormal Results

WHAT IF THEY TELL ME THAT MY MAMMOGRAM WAS ABNORMAL?

If your mammogram is abnormal, do not panic. An abnormal mammogram does not always mean that there is breast cancer.

If your screening mammogram shows an abnormality, you will need to have additional tests to be able to tell whether or not the abnormality is cancer.

YOUR DOCTOR MAY ORDER SOME OF THESE TESTS:

Diagnostic Mammogram
An additional mammogram that focuses on a specific area of the breast.

Ultrasound
An imaging test that uses sound waves to create a picture of your breast. The pictures may show whether a lump is a solid mass, a cyst filled with fluid, or both. While cysts are typically not cancerous, a solid lump *may* be a cancerous tumor.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)
A test that uses a powerful magnet linked to a computer that creates detailed pictures of the breast.

Biopsy
A test in which fluid or tissue is removed from your breast to help find out if there is cancer.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor If Your Mammogram Was Abnormal

What tests will you perform to see if the abnormality is cancer?

When will I find out the results?

Will my insurance cover the additional tests? Will Medicare or Medicaid cover the additional tests?

Will I have to pay anything?

If the abnormality is not cancer, is it something I need treatment for?

If the abnormality is not cancer, is it something that has been linked with a potentially higher rate of breast cancer in the future? (For example, a fibroadenoma.)

When should I have a follow-up mammogram?

Questions to Ask Your Doctor if Breast Cancer is Diagnosed

To confirm a positive diagnosis of breast cancer, cells or tissues will be removed by surgery or with a needle from the abnormal area of the breast to be examined. This procedure is called a biopsy. If a biopsy confirms cancer, your doctor may perform several other tests to see if the breast cancer has spread to other areas of your body.

What did my biopsy or needle aspiration show?

What kind of breast cancer do I have?

What stage of breast cancer am I in?

What size is the tumor?

Has the cancer spread to my lymph nodes or other parts of my body (metastasized)?

What are my treatment options?

What types of treatment would you recommend?

How much time do I have to make decisions about my treatment choices?

Who will coordinate my care?

- Health care Provider:
- Office Phone Number:
- Facility Address:

What other tests will be done to check if the cancer has spread?

Will you refer me to a doctor who specializes in treating people with cancer (oncologist)?

If so, what is the contact information for the oncologist?

- Facility Name:
- Oncologist Name:
- Office Phone Number:
- Facility Address:

- Appointment Date:
- Appointment Time:

What is my chance for recovery (prognosis)?