



Facts About DES & Breast Cancer

DES – a synthetic estrogen that was prescribed to pregnant women during 1938—1971 to prevent miscarriages or premature delivery – has been linked to several health risks. Included among these, is an increased risk of breast cancer among women who were prescribed DES while pregnant and DES Daughters – women who were exposed to DES in the womb.

Research available through CDC's DES Update currently confirms the following facts pertaining to the affect of DES exposure on a woman's risk for breast cancer.

BREAST CANCER HEALTH RISKS

- In the United States, women who may be at an increased risk for breast cancer as a result of DES exposure include women who were pregnant and women who were born during 1938—1971.
- Women who were prescribed DES while pregnant are at a modestly increased risk for breast cancer. Studies have shown a 30 percent increased risk for breast cancer among women prescribed DES while pregnant than among women who weren't prescribed DES.
- In a recent 2002 study, DES Daughters over 40 years old were 2.5 times more likely to experience breast cancer than were unexposed women over age 40. Findings of the study are not definitive, but suggest that exposure to DES in the womb may also be associated with an increased risk of breast cancer.
- Early detection of breast cancer is the best course of action for women who were prescribed DES while pregnant. To increase chances for early breast cancer detection, CDC's DES Update encourages women to follow a regular schedule for breast cancer screening recommended by their health care provider.
- Providers may recommend practicing breast self-examinations as a way to detect any lumps in the breasts and scheduling mammogram examinations every 1-2 years for women 40 years of age or older.

ASSESSING LIKELIHOOD OF DES EXPOSURE

- CDC's DES Update Web site provides a Self-Assessment Guide featuring a series of questions designed to help individuals assess their likelihood of DES exposure.
- An interactive version of CDC's DES Update Self-Assessment Guide is free and available online at www.cdc.gov/DES, and individuals can also request a printed version by calling toll-free at 1-888-232-6789.