Breast Cancer: Know the Risks

Many things can increase the chance that you'll get breast cancer. They're called **risk factors**. Some things you can change. Others you can't.

Lifestyle

Get at least 4 hours of exercise each week.

Keep a healthy weight, especially after menopause.

Limit alcoholic drinks to one per day.

Menstruation

Starting your period before age 12.

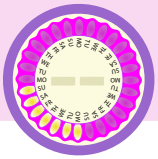
Starting menopause (the "change of life") after age 55.

Motherhood

Having children after age 35 or never having children.

Not breastfeeding your babies.

Hormones



If you're taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT), ask your doctor if you need it.

Some types of HRT increase your risk for breast cancer and can cause "dense breasts" (more breast tissue than fat tissue). Dense breasts increase your risk for breast cancer and make it harder for a mammogram to find cancer.

Family History & Genetics

Relatives with breast cancer or ovarian cancer at a young age.

Changes in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes related to breast cancer.

Other Risk Factors

Getting older.

Radiation treatment to the chest area.

Breast cancer or certain other breast problems in the past.

Having one or more of these risks doesn't mean you'll get breast cancer. Also, some women have breast cancer even when they don't have any of these risks. So, talk to your doctor about what you can do to lower your risk, and the right screening for you.

No insurance? You may be able to get free or low-cost screening through CDC's National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. Call (800) CDC-INFO or scan this QR code.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Cancer Prevention and Control

More information about breast cancer: www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/