

# What is Breast Cancer?



**Breast Cancer is uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells in the breast which can form malignant (cancerous) lumps (tumors). Some breast lumps are benign (not cancerous).**



In the United States, 1 in 8 women could develop breast cancer in their lifetime. And, while the diagnoses are predominantly for women, men are affected too.

## **BREAST CANCER TYPES**

Breast cancer that begins in the lobules, or milk-producing glands, is “lobular carcinoma”. If it begins in the ducts that carry milk, it is “ductal carcinoma”.

Cancer cells that remain only in breast tissue is called “in situ”. If the cells spread outside the breast to other parts of the body, it is called “invasive breast cancer”.

## **SYMPTOMS**

- Breast lump or thickening, often without pain
- Change in size, shape or appearance of the breast
- Dimpling, redness, pitting or other changes in the skin
- Change in nipple appearance or the skin surrounding the nipple (areola)
- Abnormal or bloody fluid from the nipple.

## **RISK FACTORS**

According to the World Health Organization, factors that can increase the risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer include:

- Age
- Weight / Obesity
- Use of alcohol and tobacco, and history of radiation exposure
- Family history
- Reproductive history (i.e. age of first menstrual period and pregnancies)
- Postmenopausal hormone therapies

**However, nearly 50% of women diagnosed with breast cancer in the U.S. have no risk factors besides gender and age.  
So being seen and screened early is key.**





# Breast Cancer Detection and Prevention



**Breast cancer detected early stage can allow for the identification of smaller tumors, which can often be treated with less invasive procedures and treatments.**

## **SCREENING AND EARLY DETECTION**

Regular breast cancer screenings can increase the chances of detecting a cancer at an early stage when it is most treatable. According to the American Cancer Society, when breast cancer is detected early and localized, the five-year survival rate is nearly 100%.

- Detection Methods / Screenings include:
  - Self-examinations
  - Mammograms
  - Ultrasounds
  - Clinical breast exams

While mammograms are recommended yearly for women ages 40 and older, screenings can start earlier if you have a symptom or family history of breast cancer.

**Discuss the appropriate screening schedule with your healthcare provider based on your individual history and risk factors.**

## **DIET & EXERCISE**

- Engage in regular physical activity, maintain a healthy weight, and limit alcohol consumption can help reduce the risk of breast cancer.
- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can contribute to lowering the risk.





# Stages & Treatments

**Cancer staging is a system used to describe the extent and progression of cancer in the body. By determining the stage, doctors can best decide a course of treatment.**

## **Stage 0 / Noninvasive**

- Cancer cells are found in the breast ducts but have not spread beyond the ducts.

## **Stage 1 / Early Stage - Invasive**

- Cancer cells have spread beyond the milk ducts or lobules into the surrounding breast tissue but have not spread into the lymph nodes.

## **Stage 2 / Invasive - Localized**

- Cancer cells have spread beyond the breast tissue into 1-3 lymph nodes (auxilliary lymph nodes) nearest to the breast.

## **Stage 3 / Invasive - Regional Spread**

- Cancer cells have spread beyond the breast tissue into lymph nodes or muscles further away from the breast.

## **Stage 4 / Metastatic - Distant Spread**

- Advanced breast cancer that has spread (metastasized) from the breast to other organs of the body.

**Depending on your stage, different treatments may be used.**

## **Treatments**

- Surgery
- Hormonal therapy - blocks cancer cells from getting the hormones they need to grow
- Radiation therapy - uses high-energy rays (similar to X-rays) to kill the cancer cells
- Chemotherapy - uses medicines to shrink or kill the cancer cells. The drugs can be pills you take or given in your veins, or sometimes both
- Biological therapy - works with your body's immune system to help it fight cancer cells