

What is Breast Cancer?



Breast cancer is a disease that begins when cells in the breast grow out of control. These abnormal cells can form a tumor and may spread to nearby lymph nodes or other parts of the body if not detected and treated. Breast cancer can form in one or both breasts and affects both women and men.

Early detection and advances in treatment have helped improve outcomes for many people diagnosed with the disease. Understanding what breast cancer is the first step toward early detection and informed decision-making.



How common is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers in the United States and around the world. In the U.S., 1 in 8 women—or approximately 13%—will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. While it is much less common, men can also develop breast cancer, accounting for about 1% of all breast cancer cases.



Breast cancer risk factors

Many factors can influence a person's risk of developing breast cancer, but having one or more risk factors does not mean someone will develop the disease. Some risk factors, such as age, family history, inherited gene mutations, and breast density, cannot be changed, while others, like maintaining a healthy weight, staying physically active, and limiting alcohol consumption, may help reduce risk. It's also important to remember that many people diagnosed with breast cancer have no known risk factors other than being female and getting older.

Breast self-exam

A breast self-exam is an early detection tool that can help you identify any changes in your breasts that should be reported to your doctor. Women ages 18 and older are encouraged to become familiar with how their breasts normally look and feel through regular breast self-awareness. Having breast self-awareness makes it easier to notice if any concerning changes are present. Performing a monthly breast self-exam is an important part of practicing early detection.

Clinical breast exam

A clinical breast exam is performed by a healthcare professional who is trained to recognize the presence of breast abnormalities or concerns. A clinical breast exam is usually performed by a doctor or gynecologist during a woman's annual well visit or well-woman exam. It typically involves both a visual inspection of the breasts and a manual check of the tissue for any unusual texture or lumps.

Reference: **By NBCF team**

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