



Key Question About Breast Cancer



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Key Question On Breast Cancer

What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is the abnormal growth of the cells lining the breast ducts or lobules. These abnormal cells have the potential to spread to other parts of the body. Most breast cancers are found when they are invasive. This means the cancer has spread from the breast ducts or lobules into the surrounding breast tissue. Invasive breast cancer can be early, locally advanced or advanced (metastatic).

Who gets breast cancer?

Anyone can develop breast cancer. While it is much more common in women, men can also get breast cancer. Breast cancer in males is usually diagnosed and treated in the same way as it is for females.

What are the different types of breast cancer conditions?

Non-invasive breast conditions Also called carcinoma in situ. These are a precancerous condition where the cells look like cancer cells, but have not invaded nearby tissues.

Ductal Carcinoma In Situ (DCIS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• abnormal cells in the ducts of the breast• may develop into invasive breast cancer• treated in a similar way to invasive breast cancer, but chemotherapy is not used
Lobular Carcinoma In Situ (LCIS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• abnormal cells in the lobules of the breast• increases the risk of developing cancer in either breast• needs regular mammograms or other scans

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Invasive breast cancer There are two main types of invasive breast cancer. They are named after the area of the breast, they start in.

Invasive Ductal Carcinoma (IDC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • starts in the ducts • accounts for about 80% of breast cancers
Invasive Lobular Carcinoma (ILC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • starts in the lobules • makes up about 10% of breast cancers

There are other less common types of breast cancer. These include inflammatory breast cancer, Paget's disease of the nipple, medullary carcinoma, mucinous carcinoma and papillary carcinoma. If invasive breast cancer spreads beyond the breast tissue and nearby lymph nodes, it is called advanced or metastatic breast cancer.

What are the risk factors?

Many factors can increase your risk of breast cancer. But having risk factors does not mean that you will develop breast cancer.

Female specific

Personal factors	Older age; dense breast tissue as seen on a mammogram.
Lifestyle factors	Being overweight or gaining weight after menopause; drinking alcohol every day; not being physically active.



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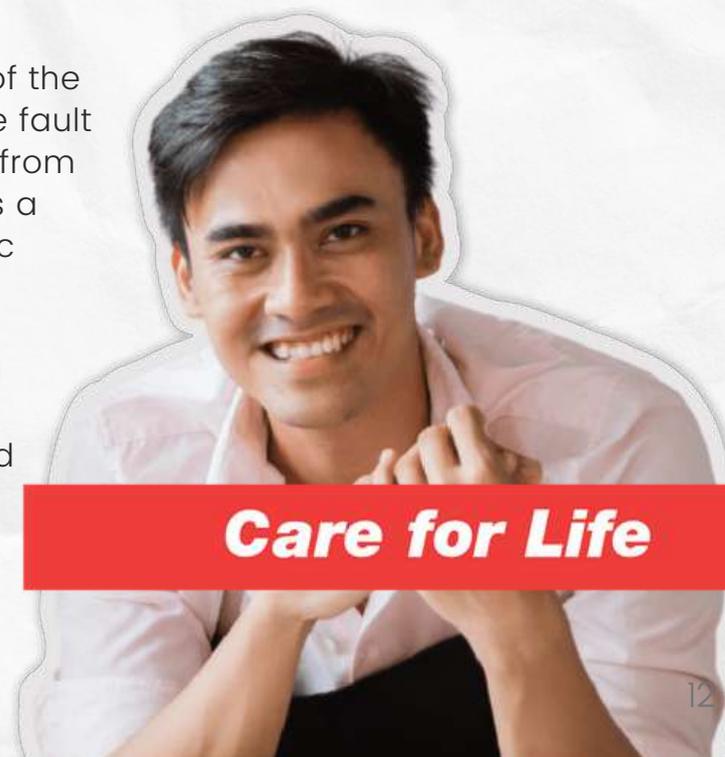
Reproductive factors	Starting first period younger than 12; being older than 30 at the birth of first child; not giving birth; not having breastfed; going through menopause after 55
Family history factors	A family history of breast cancer and/or a particular type of ovarian cancer in first degree relatives (e.g. mother, sister) on the same side of the family, especially if diagnosed at a young age

Male specific

Personal factors	Older age
Medical factors	A rare genetic syndrome called Klinefelter syndrome – males with this syndrome have three sex chromosomes (XXY) instead of the usual two (XY)

Inherited breast cancer gene

Most people diagnosed with breast cancer don't have a family history of the disease. However, a small number of people may have inherited a gene fault that increases their breast cancer risk. Everyone inherits a set of genes from each parent, so they have two copies of each gene. Sometimes there is a fault in one copy of a gene. This fault is called a mutation or pathogenic variant. The two most common gene mutations linked to breast cancer are the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes. Other types include CDH1, PTEN, STK11, TP53, PALB2, ATM and CHEK2. Women in families with an inherited BRCA1 or BRCA2 change are at increased risk of breast and ovarian cancers. Men in families with an inherited BRCA2 change may be at an increased risk of breast and prostate cancers. To find out if you have inherited a gene mutation, you can visit a family cancer clinic. Talk to your doctor or breast cancer nurse.



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What are the symptoms?

Some people have no symptoms and the cancer is found during a mammogram (a low-dose x-ray of the breast) through the National Breast Cancer Screening Program. If you do have symptoms, they could include:

A lump, lumpiness or thickening, especially if it is in only one breast

A change in the size or shape of the breast

A change to the nipple, such as a change in shape, crusting, sores or ulcers, redness, a clear or bloody discharge, or a nipple that turns in (inverted) when it used to stick out

A change in the skin of the breast, such as dimpling or indentation, a rash, a scaly appearance, unusual redness or other colour changes

Swelling or discomfort in the armpit

Ongoing, unusual pain that is not related to your normal monthly menstrual cycle, remains after your period and occurs in one breast only.

Most breast changes aren't caused by cancer. If you have symptoms, see your doctor without delay.

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