

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Fast Facts

Not counting some kinds of skin cancer, breast cancer in the United States is:

- the most common cancer in women, accounting for 1 in 4 cancers in US women,
- white women have a higher incidence of breast cancer than African American women beginning at age 45, but African American women are more likely to die from breast cancer,
- for every 100 cases of breast cancer, less than 1 is in men.

Lower Your Risk of Breast Cancer

- Control your weight and exercise.
- Know your family history of breast cancer. If you have a mother, sister, or daughter with breast cancer, ask your doctor about your risk of getting breast cancer and how you can lower your risk.
- Find out the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

Symptoms

Different people have different warning signs for breast cancer. Some people do not have any signs or symptoms at all. A person may find out they have breast cancer after a routine mammogram. Some warning signs of breast cancer are:

- New lump in the breast or underarm (armpit).
- Thickening or swelling of part of the breast.
- Irritation or dimpling of breast skin.
- Redness or flaky skin in the nipple area or the breast.
- Pulling in of the nipple or pain in the nipple area.
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood.
- Any change in the size or the shape of the breast.
- Pain in any area of the breast.

Keep in mind that some of these warning signs can happen with other conditions that are not cancer. If you have any signs that worry you, be sure to see your doctor right away.



Kinds of Screening Tests

Breast cancer screening means checking a woman's breasts for cancer before there are signs or symptoms of the disease.

Three main tests are used to screen the breasts for cancer, mammogram, clinical breast exam and breast self-exam.

Talk to your doctor about which tests are right for you, and when you should have them.

A **mammogram** is an X-ray of the breast. Mammograms are the best method to detect breast cancer early when it is easier to treat and before it is big enough to feel or cause symptoms. Having regular mammograms can lower the risk of dying from breast cancer. If you are age 40 years or older, be sure to have a screening mammogram every year according to Sentara Healthcare guidelines.

A **clinical breast exam** is an examination by a doctor or nurse, who uses his or her hands to feel for lumps or other changes. Be sure to have a clinical breast exam every 3 years from 18 to 39 years old, and annually starting at 40 years old.

A **breast self-exam** is when you check your own breasts for lumps, changes in size or shape of the breast, or any other changes in the breasts or underarm (armpit).

Where Can I Go to Get Screened?

Most likely, you can get screened for breast cancer at a clinic, hospital, or doctor's office. If you want to be screened for breast cancer, call your doctor's office. They can help you schedule an appointment. Most health insurance companies pay for the cost of breast cancer screening tests. You can find very valuable information at <http://www.cdc.gov> or at <http://www.cancer.org>.