



Breast Health Guide

Do Something Good for Yourself

Good health takes effort – eating right, exercising, learning to manage stress and getting regular checkups. As a woman, breast health is also an important part of caring for yourself. Learn how to reduce your risk and find breast cancer early.



One in eight women
will get breast cancer in her lifetime.

A Combined Approach to Breast Health

Edith Sanford Breast Centers recommend a combined approach to breast health. You and your provider will talk about the best way to keep your breasts healthy. Ask questions about any concerns.

- Be aware of cancer risk factors – some you can change, some you cannot.
- Reduce risk factors with healthy lifestyle choices.
- Be aware of how your breasts look and feel. Learn what is normal for you.
- Have clinical breast exams at regular check-ups.
- Talk with your provider about your personal risk for breast cancer.
 - Women at average risk for breast cancer are advised to start having a yearly mammogram at age 40.
 - Women at higher risk for breast cancer should work with their provider to decide what age to start having a yearly mammogram and if other screening exams may be needed.

Risk Factors You Cannot Change

Risk factors may increase your chance of having a health problem. Talk to your provider about your risk factors for breast cancer.

Being a Woman

Men can get breast cancer, but 99 out of 100 people who have breast cancer are women. Transgender people should speak with their provider or visit an Edith Sanford Breast Center to learn if they are at increased risk of breast cancer. Hormone therapy may affect your personal risk of developing cancer.

Getting Older

Your risk of getting breast cancer is greater as you get older. Most breast cancer is found in women over 50 years of age.

Family History or Genetic Changes

Your chance of getting breast cancer is greater if your mother, sister, or daughter had it. Inherited changes in certain genes (BRCA1, BRCA2, and others) increase the risk. Ask your provider about seeing a genetic counselor to learn if genetic testing is right for you.

Personal Breast History

If you have had breast cancer before, you are more likely to develop a second breast cancer. Having dense breasts or non-cancer breast conditions that cause extra cell growth in the ducts or lobules of your breast increases your risk of developing breast cancer.

Menstrual and Pregnancy History

Women who started having periods before age 12 or who went through menopause after age 55 have an increased risk of breast cancer. Women who had their first full-term pregnancy after age 30 or who never had a full-term pregnancy are also at an increased risk.

Radiation Therapy

Women who have had radiation therapy to their chest or breasts before age 30 are at an increased risk for breast cancer.

Risk Factors You Can Control

Eating a healthy diet, exercising, limiting alcohol, losing weight, and avoiding hormone replacement therapy can reduce your risk for breast cancer and other health problems.

Healthy Eating Tips

- Aim to eat a **plant-based diet**, high in fiber and nutrients.
 - Try to make 2/3 of every meal vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes
 - Plants provide a feeling of fullness with fewer calories
- Choose **whole foods** as much as possible.
 - Whole foods have little processing and few or no additives
 - Limit dining out and fast foods
 - Read food labels and limit products with added sugars
 - Avoid beverages with added sugars such as soda, sweet teas and coffees, and juice drinks
 - Drink more water
- Balance your meals with **lean protein**.
 - Include fish, skinless poultry, eggs, fat-free or low-fat dairy foods, and plant proteins such as beans, dry peas, lentils, soy, quinoa, nuts, and seeds
 - Limit red meats and processed meats
 - Include 2 servings of fish each week
- Choose a **low-fat diet**.
 - Choose fat-free or low-fat dairy foods; limit butter and cream
 - Bake, broil, or steam foods rather than frying
 - Choose liquid vegetable oils such as olive, canola, or avocado oil
 - Include foods high in omega-3 such as fish, walnuts, chia, and flaxseeds
- Be mindful of **hunger and fullness cues**.

- Consider these **cancer-protective diets**:
 - Mediterranean Diet
 - DASH diet
 - MIND diet
 - Diet recommendations from the American Cancer Society and the American Institute for Cancer Research

Exercise

Exercise may reduce breast cancer risk. Tips for starting an exercise routine:

- Keep trying different forms of exercise until you find one or more that you enjoy.
- Start slowly. Increase the amount of time you exercise a little each week until you are exercising a total of 2 1/2 hours each week.
- Find a workout buddy. When you agree to work out with another person, you are more likely to follow through.
- Add activity to your day when you can.
 - Set a timer and move for 3 minutes every hour.
 - Walk to your coworker's office instead of sending an email.
 - Clean your house with energy.
 - Park your car at the end of a parking lot to increase your steps.

If You Are Overweight

Women who are overweight may have a higher risk for breast cancer. To reduce this risk, start adding healthy habits for gradual weight loss and a healthier life. Talk to your provider first if you have any health concerns or questions.

Adding healthy habits one at a time can help you lose weight.

To get started:

- Choose one of the nutrition or exercise tips in this brochure.
- When that choice is part of your routine, choose another healthy habit to add.
- Instead of going on short-term diets, start a new normal way to eat and be active.

Alcohol Intake

To reduce your risk of developing breast cancer, stop drinking alcohol or limit your intake to 2 to 5 drinks each week. One drink is equal to:

- 12 ounces of beer
- 4 ounces of wine
- 1 to 1.5 ounces of distilled alcohol (such as vodka, gin, or other hard liquor)

Hormone Therapy for Menopause

Women who use combined estrogen and progestin treatment for menopause for more than 5 years have an increased chance of breast cancer. Talk to your provider about the risks and benefits of using hormones. Ask if there are other treatments you can try.

Tobacco Use

Smoking, vaping, and second hand smoke have been linked to a higher risk of breast cancer. Tobacco use also increases the risk of dying from breast cancer. Talk with your provider to get help to stop using tobacco. You may also contact smokefree.gov or call (800) QUIT NOW / (800) 784-8669.



Breast Self-Awareness

Being aware of how your breasts normally look and feel can help you notice changes in your breasts. Often breast changes are not cancer, but it is important to have them checked.

Call your provider if there are changes in your breasts such as:

- Lump in the breast or armpit
- Change in color, shape, or size of the breast
- Swelling or thickening of the breast
- Skin changes, such as dimpling or puckering
- Pain, redness, or soreness in the breast or nipple that does not go away or gets worse
- Fluid, other than breast milk, leaking from the nipple

Clinical Breast Exam

A breast exam is often part of a regular checkup by your provider. The provider will carefully look at your breasts. The provider will also feel your breasts and under arms for lumps or anything else that seems unusual. When you need to have a breast exam may depend on your age, health, or family history. Talk to your provider about how often to have a breast exam.



Common Breast Conditions

Most women have breast changes at some time in their lives. Your age, hormone levels, and medicines may cause lumps, bumps, or discharge.

If you have a breast lump, persistent breast pain, discharge from the nipple that is not breast milk, skin irritation, or changes to your breast, see your provider. Minor and serious breast problems have similar symptoms. Although many women fear cancer, most breast problems are not cancer.

Some common breast changes are:

- **Fibrocystic breast changes** – lumpiness, thickening, and swelling; often just before your period
- **Cysts** – fluid-filled lumps that may be tender
- **Fibroadenomas** – solid, round, rubbery lumps that move easily when pushed; found most often in younger women
- **Intraductal papillomas** – non-cancerous, wart-like tumors that grow inside the milk ducts
- **Blocked milk ducts**
- **Nipple discharge** when not breastfeeding; this can be normal, but have it checked by your provider
- **Breast infection (mastitis)** – causes swelling, pain, and fever; usually happens while breastfeeding, but can occur when you are not pregnant or breastfeeding
- **Breast pain** - most often not cancer, check with your provider if you:
 - Also have a lump or other changes in your breast
 - Have pain that does not go away or occurs often for more than 6 weeks in the same area of your breast

Mammogram

A mammogram is an x-ray picture of the breast. It can be used to check for breast cancer when you have no signs of the disease (screening mammogram). It can also be used if you have a lump or other sign of breast problems (diagnostic mammogram).

During your test:

- You will need to undress from the waist up.
- The technologist will position your breast to get the best image.
- Each of your breasts will be compressed, one at a time. This helps get the most complete x-ray image.

When making your appointment, tell the breast center if:

- **You have noticed any changes in your breast.**
- **It is hard for you to stand.** We will arrange for you to sit during your mammogram.
- **You have breast implants.** You should continue to have mammograms, but implants can hide some breast issues.

Be sure to have mammograms as often as advised by your provider.

Tips for Your Mammogram

- Schedule your mammogram right after your period when your breasts are less tender.
- Wear a shirt with shorts, pants, or a skirt that you can leave on when you undress from the waist up.
- Do not use deodorant, perfume, cream, lotion, or powder on your breasts. They can cause shadows on the mammogram.
- Tell the mammogram technologist about any skin tags, scars, or moles you have in the area of your breasts.

Other Screening Options

Your provider may recommend other breast cancer screening tests depending on your history. These may include:

- **Breast ultrasound.** Painless sound waves create a picture of the breast tissue. It is often used to learn more about a breast problem that was found on a mammogram or during a breast exam.
- **Breast MRI or Abbreviated MRI.** A strong magnet, radio waves, and a computer create detailed pictures of the breast tissue. IV contrast medicine is often used to see more details. It may be used for women who are at high risk.
- **Contrast Enhanced Mammography (CEM).** IV contrast medicine is given during a mammogram to make it easier to see more details. This test may be used for women who have a breast problem that was found on a mammogram, have symptoms, or are at high risk for breast cancer.

Edith Sanford Breast Health Centers

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If you are 40 years old or older and due for a breast cancer screening, schedule a mammogram through My Sanford Chart or by calling your provider's clinic.

If you are under 40 years old but have symptoms or a family history of breast cancer, talk to your provider about getting screened earlier or call (855) 35-EDITH/(855) 353-3484.

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