

Breast Cancer in Young Women

Cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. When cancer starts in the breast, it is called *breast cancer*. Except for skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer in American women.

Most breast cancers are found in women who are 50 and older, but breast cancer also affects younger women. About 11% of all new cases of breast cancer in the United States are found in women younger than 45 years of age. While breast cancer diagnosis and treatment are difficult for women of any age, young survivors may find it overwhelming.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is working to increase breast cancer awareness and improving the health and quality of life of young breast cancer survivors and young women at a higher risk of getting breast cancer.

Who has a higher risk?

Some young women are at a higher risk for getting breast cancer at an early age compared with other women their age. If you are a woman younger than age 45, you may have a **higher risk** if—

- You have close relatives who were diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancer (particularly at age 45 or younger).
- You have changes in certain breast cancer genes (BRCA1 and BRCA2).
- You have an Ashkenazi Jewish heritage.
- You were treated with radiation therapy to the breast or chest in childhood or early adulthood.
- You have had breast cancer or other breast health problems such as lobular carcinoma *in situ* (LCIS), ductal carcinoma *in situ* (DCIS), atypical ductal hyperplasia, or atypical lobular hyperplasia.

You have an **average risk** of getting breast cancer at a young age if the risk factors listed above don't apply to you. Aside from genetics, little is known about what causes breast cancer in women younger than 45 years of age.

What can I do to reduce my risk?

If you are at **higher risk**, talk to your doctor. Your doctor may refer you to a genetic counselor, recommend that you get screened earlier and more frequently, and consider medicines or surgeries that can lower your risk.

If you are at **average risk**, it is important for you to know how your breasts normally look and feel. Talk to your doctor if you notice changes in your breasts.

What is CDC doing about breast cancer in younger women?

CDC works with public, nonprofit, and private partners to address breast cancer in women by—

- Conducting public health breast cancer research.
- Convening the Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer in Young Women.
- Funding programs that support awareness, education, and survivorship programs.
- Educating young women and medical providers about breast cancer and breast health.

More Information

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