

Understanding Your Breast Cancer Risk

General Guidance

Each woman has her own risk factors that increase her risk of developing breast cancer. Some common breast cancer risk factors include getting older, experiencing menopause at older age, having family members with breast cancer and having a prior breast biopsy.

The American College of Radiology[®] and Society of Breast Imaging recommend that each woman talk with her doctor about her breast cancer risk no later than her 30th birthday. This is especially important for Jewish women, African American women and other minority groups. By talking with their healthcare provider, women can better understand their breast cancer risk and their best breast cancer screening options.

Average-Risk Women

In the United States, one in eight women will develop breast cancer during her lifetime.



Most women who develop breast cancer have no family history of breast cancer.

The American College of Radiology and Society of Breast Imaging recommend a screening mammogram every year beginning at age 40.

Increased-Risk Women

Some women have a higher chance of getting breast cancer than others.

What factors might increase your risk?

- You have family members with breast cancer (although most women who develop breast cancer have no breast cancer in their family).
- You have already had breast cancer.
- You carry certain genetic mutations, including BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations.
- Someone in your family is a genetic mutation carrier and you remain untested yourself.
- You have been previously treated with radiation to your chest for cancer.
- You have had certain “high-risk” results on breast biopsies such as atypias or pre-cancerous lesions.
- You have dense breast tissue on mammography.

Some women with one or more risk factors may be considered at highest risk for developing breast cancer during their lifetimes.

If you are in this highest-risk category, talk to your doctor about starting breast cancer screening as early as age 25 or 30. You and your doctor should discuss getting a breast MRI scan (magnetic resonance imaging scan) in addition to a screening mammogram every year. Breast MRI can help find more breast cancers.

Please talk to your healthcare provider to learn more about your breast cancer screening options.