

BREAST CANCER RISK FACTORS

Some factors that affect breast cancer risk (in alphabetical order):

- Age
- Age at first childbirth and number of childbirths
- Age at first period
- Age at menopause
- Ashkenazi Jewish heritage
- Being born female
- Being overweight or obese
- Birthweight
- Birth control pill use
- Breastfeeding
- Breast density on mammogram
- Drinking alcohol
- Exercise
- Family history of breast, ovarian or prostate cancer
- Height
- Hyperplasia
- Inherited gene mutations
- Menopausal hormone therapy (postmenopausal hormone use)
- Personal history of breast or ovarian cancer
- Smoking
- Radiation treatment to the chest wall at a young age
- Weight gain

Learn more about breast cancer risk factors at komen.org.



What affects your risk of breast cancer?

There are things that increase (or decrease) the chance of getting breast cancer. These are called risk factors. However, the exact causes of breast cancer aren't fully known. No one knows why one person gets breast cancer and another doesn't.

Breast cancer is complex. It's likely caused by a combination of risk factors. Learning about these factors can help you understand your risk of breast cancer.

Some risk factors are out of your control. For example, the two most common risk factors for breast cancer are being born female and getting older. These are things you cannot change. However, there are some risk factors you may be able to control, like leading a healthy lifestyle. Other risk factors are still unknown.

Since you can only control some risk factors, you cannot avoid some amount of risk. Most risk factors you have some control over only have a small effect on risk. This means no one behavior will prevent breast cancer. But, it also means there's no one risk factor that will cause it.

Talk with your doctor about your risk of breast cancer.

Make healthy lifestyle choices

Some **healthy lifestyle** choices are linked to a lower risk of breast cancer.

- Maintain a **healthy weight**.
- Make **exercise** a part of your routine.
- Limit **alcohol** intake.
- Limit **menopausal hormone** use.
- **Breastfeed** if you can.

This fact sheet is intended to be a brief overview. For more information, visit komen.org or call Susan G. Komen's Breast Care Helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET or email at helpline@komen.org. Se habla español.

Related online resources:

- Breast Cancer Screening and Follow-Up Tests
- Breast Density
- Breast Self-Awareness Messages
- Genetics and Breast Cancer
- How Hormones Affect Breast Cancer
- Healthy Living and Breast Cancer
- Questions to Ask Your Doctor - Breast Density
- Risk-Lowering Options for Women at Higher Risk of Breast Cancer

Other resources:

Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool (the Gail Model)

This tool is often used by doctors to estimate breast cancer risk. Although the tool can estimate your risk, it can't tell whether or not you'll get breast cancer.

My Family Health History Tool

This tool helps you gather and record your family health history. It organizes health information which can be downloaded and shared with your family members, doctors or a genetic counselor.



Get the facts about breast cancer

FACTS:

1. The most common risk factors for breast cancer are **being born female** and **getting older**.
2. Risk factors can vary by **race and ethnicity**.
3. Most women who get breast cancer don't have a **family history** of breast cancer.
4. Women who drink **alcohol** have an increased risk of breast cancer.
5. Wearing a **bra** doesn't cause breast cancer.

There are common myths about what causes breast cancer. Visit [komen.org](https://www.komen.org) for safe, accurate and current breast cancer information about risk factors. Share what you've learned and help stop the spread of myths that cause worry and concern.

If you or a loved one have questions about breast cancer **risk factors**, call our Breast Care Helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) or email helpline@komen.org. A trained and caring staff member is available to assist you Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. ET.

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