

# Protect yourself from Breast Cancer

Early detection can save lives



# What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer refers to cancer originating from breast tissue, most commonly from the inner lining of milk ducts or the lobules that supply the ducts with milk.

There are 3 types of breast cancer:

## Non-invasive Breast Cancer

Ductal Carcinoma-In-Situ (DCIS) is a precancerous condition that is confined to the ducts whilst Lobular Carcinoma-In-Situ (LCIS) (lobules) is a risk factor for invasive cancer.

## Invasive Cancer

It's a condition when the cancer has spread beyond the ducts or lobules and affected the surrounding tissues. In the early stages it is generally treatable as the tumour is relatively small and has not spread to the lymph nodes.

## Metastatic Breast Cancer

This is when the cancer has spread to other parts of the body. In particular, if cancer cells are detected in the lymph nodes under the arm, it may spread to other lymph nodes and organs such as the bones, liver or lungs.

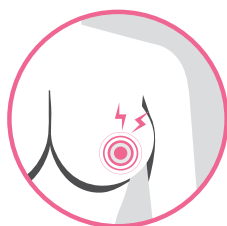


# What are the symptoms?

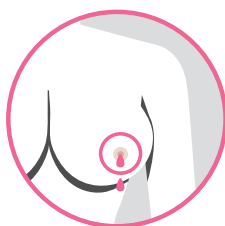
While the following symptoms could also be shared by other illnesses, early stage cancer doesn't cause pain and you should see your doctor for a full diagnosis and early treatment.



**Painless lump in the breast**



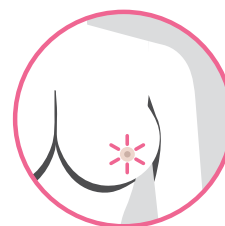
**Persistent itch and rash around the nipple**



**Bleeding or unusual discharge from the nipple**



**Skin over the breast is swollen, thickened, dimpled or puckered.**



**Nipple is pulled in or retracted.**

# What you should know about Breast Cancer **risk factors**

Factors that may put you at risk:



Women are more prone to develop breast cancer. Less than 1% of all new breast cancer cases happen in men.



Age – Increasing risk from the age of 40 (for pre-menopausal women) and 50 (for post- menopausal women).

Positive family history of breast cancer.

History of neoplastic breast diseases.



Previous exposure to radiation.

Alcohol consumption.



Smoking.

# Is it possible for you to **prevent** breast cancer?

While it may not be 100% possible, you can improve your odds by practicing the following:

- ✓ Undergo Breast Self-Examination (BSE) regularly each month
- ✓ Undergo Clinical Breast Examination (CBE)
- ✓ Undergo a mammogram once a year
- ✓ Check your family history
- ✓ Keep a healthy weight / lifestyle
- ✓ Maintain an exercise regime
- ✓ Reduce consumption of red meat & fat
- ✓ Avoid alcohol consumption

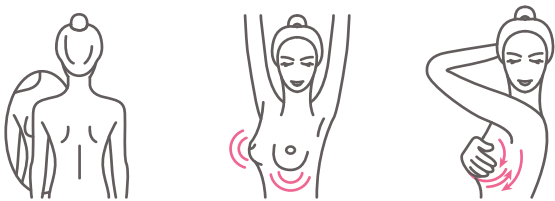


# What are the screening methods?

Screening is necessary for you to detect breast cancer early on, and it may involve any of these 5 types of screening:



## 1 Breast Self-Examination (BSE)



First, inspect your body:

- Stand in front of a mirror and look at your breasts closely, noting the shape
- Next, lift your arms above your head and scrutinise your breasts again
- Then, place your hands on your hips and press inwards to tense the muscle under your breasts
- Look close for any visible changes in the breasts



Then, palpate:

- Begin from your underarm and examine your breast in concentric circles, starting from the outer region to the nipple
- Your breasts can also be palpated in vertical strips
- Gently squeeze your nipples to look for abnormal discharge
- With your arm placed at the side, examine for lumps under your armpit again using your free hand

## 2 Clinical Breast Examination (CBE)

- Usually conducted by a doctor as he/she will notice changes involving the size, shape and texture of any lump, and also if it moves easily.
- Benign lumps are soft, smooth, round and movable, whilst a malignant lump feels hard, is oddly shaped and feels firmly attached.

## 3 Screening Mammogram

- Mammograms detect around 90% of breast cancers at a very early stage.
- During a mammogram, the breast must be squeezed to get good pictures.
- In case the breast symptom is NOT detected, your doctor may recommend an ultrasound or a biopsy.

## 4 Ultrasound

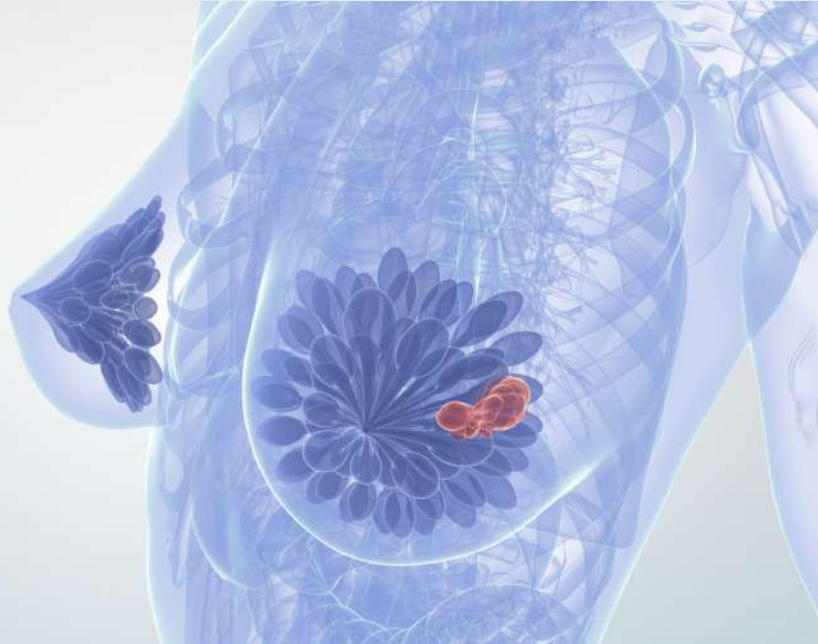
- An ultrasound device sends out sound waves that bounce off tissues to create a picture, which shows whether a lump is solid or filled with fluid.
- Fluid-filled sacs like cysts are not cancer, but a solid mass may be cancer.
- This exam may be used along with a mammogram.

## 5 Biopsy

- A biopsy involves removing fluid or tissue from your breast to check for cancer.
- It is done to check suspicious areas in addition to using imaging procedures to help see the area and remove the tissue. Such procedures include ultrasound-guided, needle-localized, or stereotactic biopsy.

# FAQs on Breast Cancer

Here are a few answers to questions that you or a loved one may have about Breast Cancer.



## 1 Does smoking cause breast cancer?

Recent research conducted in 2012 has confirmed that smoking is a contributing risk factor for developing breast cancer. Second hand smoke is also a risk factor for cancer. Smoking also directly contributes to heart and other lung diseases too.

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## 2 How often should I do a breast self-exam?

Conduct a breast self-exam once a month. Look for any changes in breast tissue, such as changes in size. Do note any palpable lumps, dimpling or puckering of the breast, inversion of the nipple, redness or scaliness of the breast skin, nipple/areola area, or discharge of secretions from the nipple.

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## 3 Does family history of breast cancer put someone at higher risk?

Statistically only 5-10% of individuals diagnosed with breast cancer have a family history of this disease.

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## 4 Are mammograms painful?

As this procedure involves compressing the breasts, it can sometimes cause slight discomfort for a very brief period of time. Patients should schedule their mammograms a week after their menstrual cycle to reduce breast sensitivity.

## 5 How does menstrual and reproductive history affect breast cancer risks?

Women who began their menstrual cycles before age 12, have no biological children, or had their first child at 30 or older, or began menopause after 55 are at a higher risk. Research has proven that the number of menstrual cycles a woman has over time influences the risks.

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## 6 Can breastfeeding reduce the risk of breast cancer?

Breastfeeding can reduce the risk of developing breast cancer.

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## 7 What are the signs that breast cancer has spread?

Metastatic breast cancer is a secondary cancer – the cancerous cells originate in breast tissue and then travel to other parts of the body. The most common areas of breast cancer metastasis are the bones, lungs and liver.

# Myths about Breast Cancer

**Myth 1:** If you maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly, eat healthy, and limit alcohol, you don't have to worry about breast cancer.

Although these behaviours can help lower breast cancer risk, they can't eliminate it completely as other factors such as family history could also play a role as a risk factor.



**Myth 2:** Breast cancer only happens to middle-aged and older women.

Younger women can and do get breast cancer, as do men. Studies have shown that one in every 25 invasive breast cancer cases occurred in women under 40.

25 - 40



**Myth 3:** If I don't have a family history of breast cancer, I won't get it.

Most people diagnosed with breast cancer have no known family history. However, over time, healthy breast cells can develop mutations on their own, eventually turning into cancer cells.



**Myth 4:** Using underarm antiperspirant can cause breast cancer.

There is no evidence of a connection between underarm antiperspirant and breast cancer, but the safety of antiperspirants is still being studied. Some studies have found that women who use underarm antiperspirants containing aluminium under their arms are more likely to have higher concentrations of aluminium in breast tissue, thereby increasing cancer risk.



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