



## October 2015 Breast Cancer Awareness

### Women's Health: Breast Cancer

Research estimates that 1 in 8 women will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer during their lifetimes. Breast cancer is a disease in which malignant cells form in the tissues of the breast. There are three main types:

- Ductal carcinoma—The most common; begins in the cells of the ducts.
- Lobular carcinoma—Begins in the lobes and is more often found in both breasts.
- Inflammatory breast cancer—An uncommon type in which the breast is warm, red and swollen.

### Causes and Risk Factors

It is unclear what specifically triggers breast cells to grow abnormally. Medical experts attribute the development of breast cancer to a combination of genetics, lifestyle choices and reproductive factors that may include:

- Older age
- Menstruation at an early age
- Family history
- Having dense breast tissue
- Having never given birth, or having first given a first birth at an older age
- Having radiation therapy to the breast/chest
- Drinking alcoholic beverages
- Taking hormones
- Being Caucasian or African-American

### Symptoms and Screenings

The most common indication of breast cancer is a lump in the breast or underarm area. Other signs may include:

- Swelling
- Skin irritation/dimpling
- Nipple pain/abnormalities
- Redness or scaly skin
- Discharge from the nipple

To detect breast cancer, a doctor may use a mammogram or breast X-ray; a biopsy, which is the removal of cells or tissues to be viewed under a microscope; estrogen and progesterone receptor tests to determine the levels of each hormone; or an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), an exam that uses a magnet, radio waves and a computer to make detailed pictures of the inside of the body.

### Prognosis and Treatment

The chance of recovery and the treatment options depend on many factors, including the stage of cancer, how fast the tumor is growing, hormone receptor levels, and a woman's age and general health. There are four types of treatment used for breast cancer:

- Surgery, ranging from the removal of a small lump to that of an entire breast (mastectomy).
- Radiation therapy that uses high-energy X-rays to kill cancer cells and to prevent their growth.
- Chemotherapy that uses drugs to stop the growth of cancer cells.
- Hormone therapy to remove or block the action of hormones to keep cancer cells from growing.

### Prevention

Talk with your healthcare professional about how best to monitor your personal breast cancer risk. Other ways to keep breast cancer at bay include:

- Limiting alcohol
- Staying physically active
- Maintaining a healthy weight

Visit [www.breastcancer.org](http://www.breastcancer.org) or [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org) for more information.

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