

A photograph of two women, one younger and one older, both smiling and looking towards the right. They are wearing white sleeveless tops.

**BE AWARE.**

**TAKE CARE.**

**Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in women.<sup>1</sup>**

So don't put things off. Watch for warning signs, know your risk factors and reduce any risks that you can. Plus, get the screening tests that can find cancer early.

### **What are the signs of breast cancer?<sup>2</sup>**

Not everyone has the same warning signs. Some people don't have any signs at all – they find out they have breast cancer after a mammogram.

#### **Common warning signs**

- › New lump in the breast or underarm (armpit)
- › Thickness or swelling of part of the breast
- › Irritation or dimples on breast skin
- › Redness or flaky skin in the nipple area or on the breast
- › Pulling in of the nipple, or pain in the nipple area
- › Nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood
- › Any change in the size or the shape of the breast
- › Pain in the breast

Keep in mind that these can be signs of other things that are not cancer. But if you have any, see your doctor right away.

#### **Protective factors that may help lower your risk<sup>3</sup>**

- › Decreasing the length of time your breast tissue is exposed to estrogen by:
  - Giving birth at a younger age
  - Breastfeeding your children
- › Getting enough exercise (four or more hours a week)
- › Taking estrogen-only therapy after a hysterectomy
- › Following doctor's recommendations for medications or medical procedures for those at high risk

#### **What are the risk factors?<sup>4</sup>**

Some of the risk factors for breast cancer are: Being a woman, being age 50 or older and having certain breast cancer genes (BRCA1 and BRCA2). These are not the only risk factors, but some of the more common ones.

#### **How often should I get a mammogram?**

A mammogram is a simple screening and is one of the best ways to detect breast cancer. When caught early, it is easier to treat successfully.<sup>5</sup> At age 40, women should talk with their doctor about when to start screening and how often to get a mammogram.

**Together, all the way.<sup>®</sup>**



## Factors that raise your risk<sup>4</sup>

- › Using combination hormone therapy for more than five years
- › Personal history of breast cancer or other breast diseases
- › Family history of breast cancer (on either your mother's or father's side of the family)
- › Treatment with radiation therapy to the breast/chest
- › Exposure to the drug diethylstilbestrol, or DES (if you took DES during pregnancy or your mother took DES during her pregnancy with you)
- › Dense breasts (as seen by a mammogram)
- › Drinking alcohol
- › Starting menopause after age 55
- › Not being physically active

## What does it mean if I have risk factors?<sup>4</sup>

- › Some women will get breast cancer without having any known risk factors.
- › Having a risk factor does not mean you will get breast cancer.
- › Most women have some risk factors and do not get breast cancer.
- › If you have breast cancer risk factors, talk with your doctor about ways you can lower your risk and about getting screened.

## Lower your risk with healthy choices<sup>6</sup>

- › Keep a healthy weight.
- › Get regular exercise (at least 2 ½ hours of moderate a week).
- › Get enough sleep.
- › Don't drink alcohol, or limit alcoholic drinks to one per day.
- › If you take hormone replacement therapy or birth control pills, ask your doctor about the risks and find out if it is right for you.
- › Breastfeed your babies, if possible.



**If you have a family history of breast cancer or the known genetic risk factors (BRCA1 and BRCA2), you may have a higher breast cancer risk. Talk with your doctor about ways to lower your risk.**



1. American Cancer Society. "How Common Is Breast Cancer?" <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/about/how-common-is-breast-cancer.html> (last medical review June 1, 2016/last reviewed January 5, 2017)

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "What Are the Symptoms of Breast Cancer?" [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic\\_info/symptoms.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/symptoms.htm) (last reviewed/last updated April 14, 2016)

3. National Cancer Institute. "Breast Cancer Prevention (PDQ®) – Patient Version." [https://www.cancer.gov/types/breast/patient/breast-prevention-pdq#section/\\_12](https://www.cancer.gov/types/breast/patient/breast-prevention-pdq#section/_12) (updated February 23, 2017)

4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "What Are the Risk Factors for Breast Cancer?" [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic\\_info/risk\\_factors.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/risk_factors.htm) (last reviewed/last updated April 4, 2016)

5. American Cancer Society. "American Cancer Society Recommendations for the Early Detection of Breast Cancer." <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/american-cancer-society-recommendations-for-the-early-detection-of-breast-cancer.html> (last medical review June 1, 2016/last revised August 18, 2016)

6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "What Can I Do to Reduce My Risk of Breast Cancer?" [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic\\_info/prevention.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/prevention.htm) (last reviewed/last updated April 14, 2016)

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