Breast Cancer Risks

Certain risk factors can increase a woman’s chance of getting breast cancer. Having one or more of these risks doesn’t mean that you’ll get breast cancer. Sometimes a woman gets breast cancer without any of the risk factors (other than being a woman and growing older.)

Age
It’s the strongest risk factor for breast cancer, and aging increases your risk.

Genetic alterations
Inherited changes in certain genes (including BRCA and PTEN) affect your risk.

Family history
A breast cancer diagnosis in your mother, sister and/or daughter, especially before age 50.

Dense breast tissue
A high percentage of dense breast tissue can make it more difficult to detect an abnormality on a mammogram.

Body weight
The chance of getting breast cancer is higher for postmenopausal women who are overweight or obese.

Reproductive and menstrual history
Having your first menstrual period before age 12, going through menopause after age 55, or having your first full-term pregnancy after age 30 raises your risk.

Radiation therapy
Undergoing radiation therapy to the chest before age 30 puts you at increased risk.

Menopausal hormonal therapy
Long term combined estrogen and progesterin menopausal hormone therapy raises your breast cancer risk.

Alcohol
Drinking alcohol frequently may increase breast cancer risk.

Breast Cancer Risk Assessment
A tool used by Sutter CPMC and developed by the Breast Cancer Surveillance Consortium to estimate a woman’s 5-year risk for breast cancer.

Talk to your doctor about what you can do to lower your risk.

For more information, please visit cpmc.org/breasthealth

Breast Cancer Prevention

Healthy habits can help decrease your risk of breast cancer. But you still need to get regular screenings for breast and other types of cancer. And stay alert to any breast changes that may indicate a cause for concern, and report them to your doctor.

Maintain a healthy weight. Watch your calorie intake—and the scale—to keep a healthy weight, especially after menopause.

Exercise regularly. Physical activity helps you maintain a healthy weight which, in turn, helps prevent breast cancer.

Limit hormone therapy. Ask your doctor about managing the symptoms of menopause with exercise, dietary changes or other non-hormonal therapies.

Limit your alcohol consumption.

Don’t smoke. Evidence suggests a link between smoking and breast cancer risk.

Breastfeed. The longer you breastfeed, the greater the protective effect.