

## What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer is a malignant tumour that develops in the cells of the breast. It occurs almost entirely in women, but men, contrary to common belief, can also develop breast cancer. In fact, it is the most common form of cancer and the second leading cause of death in black women.

## Causes of Breast Cancer

It is not clear what causes breast cancer. However, there are factors that are associated with an increased risk of getting breast cancer. These factors include:

- **Being female.** Women are much more likely than men to develop breast cancer.
- **Age.** The risk of developing cancer goes up as one gets older. Most women who get breast cancer are aged over 50.
- **Menstrual and reproductive history.** Getting the first menstrual period before age 12, reaching menopause after 55, never having children or having children after age 30 all increase the risk of breast cancer.
- **Family history.** Having a mother, sister or daughter with breast cancer increases the risk of getting breast cancer.
- **Personal history of breast cancer.** If one had breast cancer in one breast, one is more likely to get it in the other breast.
- **Hormonal therapy** (Contraceptive and Postmenopausal hormonal therapy). Using

hormone containing both estrogen and progesterin for a long period increases the breast cancer risk.

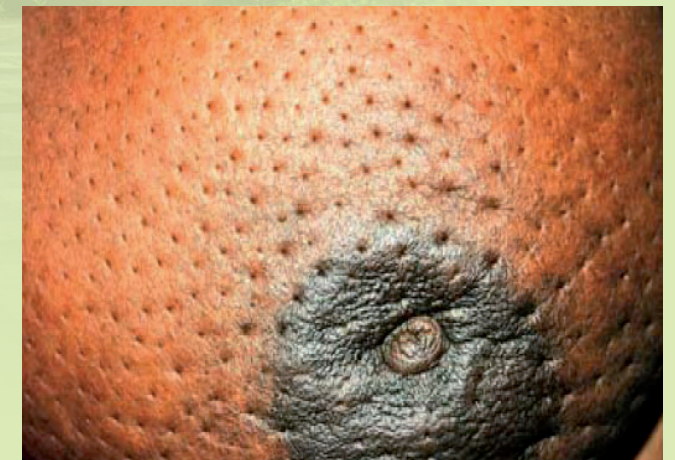
- **Radiation therapy to the chest.** Radiation therapy to the chest increases breast cancer risk.
- **Eating a poor diet.** Diet with high fat content increases the risk of developing breast cancer.
- **Physical inactivity.** Women who are not physically active have a higher risk of developing breast cancer than those who are physically active.
- **Obesity.** The chance of getting breast cancer after menopause is higher in obese/overweight than in lean/slender women.
- **Excessive drinking of alcohol.** The more alcohol you drink, the greater your risk of getting breast cancer.
- **Tobacco use** including **smoking**, and
- Exposure to **chemicals** and **toxins**.

**“Most women who get breast cancer have no known risk factors besides age, and many women with one or more risk factors never get breast cancer”**

## Sign and Symptoms of Breast Cancer

The signs and symptoms of breast cancer may include:

- Lump, hard knot or thickening in the breast.
- Change in the feel, size, shape or appearance of a breast.
- Changes to the skin over the breast, such as dimpling.
- Nipple skin changes, itchy, scaling area on the nipple/areola.
- Unusual discharge from the nipple.
- Pulling in of the nipple (inverted nipple) or nipple change direction (retracted nipple).
- Swelling, redness or increased warmth in the breast.
- Redness or pitting of the skin over the breast, like the skin of an orange.





- Dimpling or puckering of the skin on the breast.
- Unusual pain in an area of the breast.
- Ulceration on the skin over the breast.

### Breast Cancer in Men

- Men's breast cancer accounts for 1% of all breast cancers.
- The average age the breast cancer occurrence is 60 years.
- The staging, diagnosis and treatment are the same as those of women's breast cancer.
- The prognosis of breast cancer in men is worse.

### Steps for Early Detection and Diagnosis of Breast Cancer

- Monthly breast self-examination (BSE) starting at age 20.
- Clinical breast examination by a trained medical professional every 2-3 years beginning at age 20, and annually after age 40.
- Annual mammography screening for women aged 35 and above.
- Breast ultrasound to determine the nature of the new breast lump.
- Biopsy. A biopsy is the only definitive way of making a diagnosis of breast cancer.
- Other investigations depend on the stage of the disease (X-rays, CT-scan, MRI and enzymes assay).

### TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR BREAST CANCER

The treatment option for breast cancer is

determined by the type and the stage the disease has reached. The treatment Options are:

- Surgery which includes.
  - o Sentinel lymph node biopsy
  - o Lumpectomy
  - o Mastectomy
- Chemotherapy.
- Radiation therapy.
- Hormone therapy.

### Things to do to Reduce the Risk of Breast Cancer

Studies show that lifestyle changes decrease the breast cancer risk even in high-risk women. You can take the following steps to lower your risk:

- Limit alcohol intake.
- Don't smoke.
- Control your weight.
- Be physically active.
- Breast-feed.
- Limit dose and duration of hormone therapy.
- Avoid exposure to radiation and environmental pollution.

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**BREAST**  
**CANCER**

*'A Healthy Mind  
Thrives in a Healthy Body'*