



YOUR GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING BREAST CANCER

Turning the mortality rate
into the survival rate



Who we are

RFCA Ghana is a volunteered based, non-profit organization that seeks to educate, screen and treat women of Africa in Breast Cancer. RFCA Ghana links with individuals and groups to turn Breast Cancer mortality rate in Africa into the Breast Cancer survival rate. Through our programs, RFCA Ghana raises awareness of breast cancer through targeted education that erases societal stigmas and seeks to emphasize the key of early detection and prompt treatment. We aim to provide free screening and to alleviate the cost of treatment to the economically challenged women in Ghana.

OUR MISSION

To win the fight against breast cancer in Ghana, by relentlessly seeking to educate, screen and treat the economically underserved women in Ghana on breast cancer.

OUR VISION

Turn the 80% breast cancer mortality rate into the 80% breast cancer survival rate.

EDUCATION & AWARENESS

Awareness is a fundamental step to fighting breast cancer. RFCA Ghana provides and promotes free educational materials and culturally-sensitive talks about breast cancer detection to local groups and associations.

FREE SCREENING

Breast cancer is 90% treatable when detected in the early stages, so it is important that women develop the habit of monthly breast self examination (BSE) and getting an annual mammogram after 40 years (or earlier if so determined by a doctor). RFCA Ghana donates equipment and materials to deserving hospitals, pays for training to medical practitioners and hosts or finances breast cancer screening throughout the year, so all our screening for breast cancer will be at no cost to women who have been identified as economically challenged.

TREATMENT

Run For A Cure Africa works to subsidize or cover the cost of treatment to women who have been identified as economically disadvantaged.

What is Breast Cancer?

What is cancer?

In a healthy body, natural systems control the creation, growth and death of cells. Cancer occurs when these systems don't work right.

When cells don't die at the normal rate, there's more cell growth than cell death. This excess growth can form a tumor.

What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer occurs when cells in the breast divide and grow without their normal control.

Tumors in the breast tend to grow slowly. By the time a lump is large enough to feel, it may have been growing for as long as 10 years. Some tumors are aggressive and grow much faster.

About 80 percent of breast cancers begin in the milk ducts, about 10 percent begin in the lobules and a few begin in other breast tissues.

Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS)

Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) is a non-invasive breast cancer.

With DCIS, the abnormal cells are contained in the milk ducts (canals that carry milk from the lobules to the nipple openings during breastfeeding). It's called "in situ" (which means "in place") because the abnormal cells have not left the milk ducts to invade nearby breast tissue.

You may hear the terms "pre-invasive" or "pre-cancerous" to describe DCIS. Although DCIS is non-invasive, without treatment, it can develop into invasive breast cancer.

Invasive breast cancer

Invasive breast cancer occurs when abnormal cells from inside the milk ducts or lobules break out into nearby breast tissue.

Cancer cells can travel from the breast to other parts of the body through the bloodstream or the lymphatic system. They may travel early in the process when a tumor is small or later when a tumor is large.

If breast cancer spreads, the lymph nodes in the underarm area (axillary lymph nodes) are the first place it's likely to go.

Metastatic breast cancer

Metastatic breast cancer (also called stage IV or advanced breast cancer) is invasive breast cancer that has spread beyond the breast and nearby lymph nodes to other parts of the body (most often the bones, lungs, liver or brain).

Metastatic breast cancer is not a specific type of breast cancer. It's the most advanced stage of breast cancer.

Male breast cancer

Breast cancer can occur in men.

Other types of cancer that occur in the breast

Most cancers that occur in the breast are breast cancers (breast carcinomas).

In rare cases:

- Other types of cancer, such as lymphomas (cancer of the lymph system) and sarcomas (cancer of the soft tissues), can occur in the breast.
- Cancers from other sites can metastasize (spread) to the breast and mimic breast cancers.

Some of these cancers are not carcinomas.

Others are carcinomas, but they don't start in the breast. So, they are treated differently and have different risk factors than breast cancer.

Warning Signs of Breast Cancer

Most early-stage breast cancers are found with screening mammography, before any warning signs or symptoms appear.

However, breast cancer also is found when there are warning signs. So, it's

important to be aware of these warning signs and see a health care provider if you notice any breast changes.

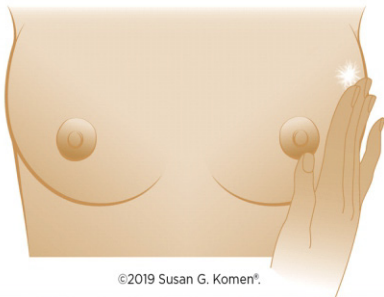
Warning signs

The warning signs of breast cancer are not the same for all women. The most common warning signs are:

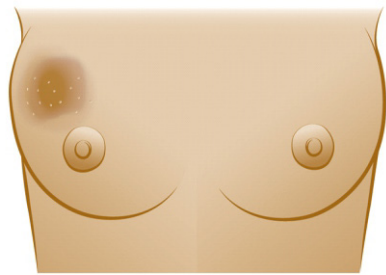
- A change in the look or feel of the breast
- A change in the look or feel of the nipple
- Nipple discharge

If you have any of the warning signs described below, see a health care provider.

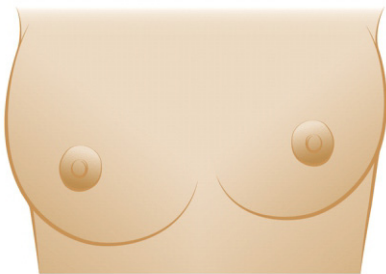
- **Lump, hard knot or thickening inside the breast or underarm area**



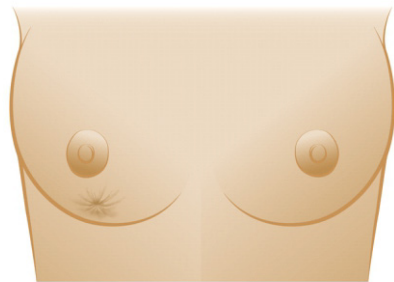
- **Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast**



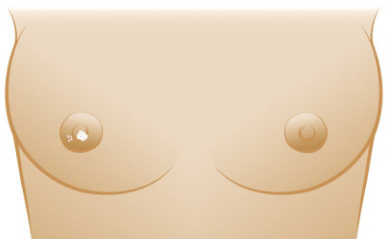
- **Change in the size or shape of the breast**



- **Dimpling or puckering of the skin**

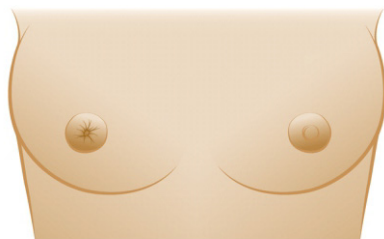


- Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple



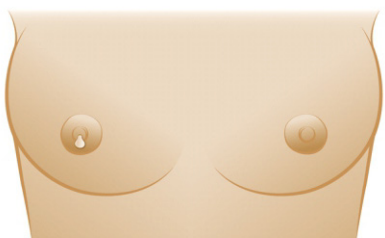
©2019 Susan G. Komen®.

- Pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast



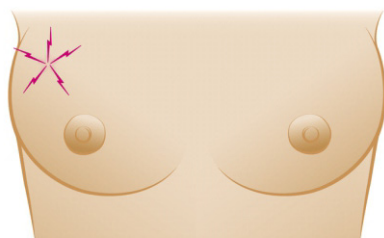
©2019 Susan G. Komen®.

- Nipple discharge that starts suddenly



©2019 Susan G. Komen®.

- New pain in one spot that does not go away



©2019 Susan G. Komen®.

In most cases, these changes are not cancer. One example is breast pain. Pain is more common with benign breast conditions than with breast cancer, but the only way to know for sure is to get it checked.

If a change turns out to be breast cancer, it's best to find it at an early stage, when the chances of survival are highest.

Breast lumps or lumpiness

Many women find their breasts feel lumpy. Breast tissue naturally has a bumpy texture.

Some women have more lumpiness in their breasts than others. In most cases, this lumpiness is no cause to worry.

If the lumpiness can be felt throughout the breast and feels like your other breast, then it's likely normal breast tissue.

Lumps that feel harder or different from the rest of the breast (or the other breast) or that feel like a change should be checked. This type of lump may be a sign of breast cancer or a benign breast condition, such as a cyst or fibroadenoma.

See a health care provider if you:

- Find a new lump (or any change) that feels different from the rest of your breast
- Find a new lump (or any change) that feels different from your other breast
- Feel something that's different from what you felt before

If you've had a benign (not cancer) lump in the past, don't assume a new lump will also be benign. The new lump may not be breast cancer, but it's best to make sure.

Nipple discharge

Liquid leaking from your nipple (nipple discharge) can be troubling, but it's rarely a sign of breast cancer.

Discharge can be your body's natural reaction when the nipple is squeezed. Signs of a more serious condition (such as breast cancer) include discharge that:

- Occurs without squeezing the nipple
- Occurs in only one breast
- Is bloody or clear (not milky)

Nipple discharge can also be caused by an infection or other condition that needs treatment.

If you have any nipple discharge, see a health care provider.

Breast Cancer Risk Factors Table

The table below lists factors linked (or not linked in some cases) to breast cancer. It also lists many factors still under study.

Factors are grouped based on the strength of the scientific evidence:

- Established and probable factors have the strongest evidence behind them. They are recognized as linked (or not linked in some cases) to breast cancer.
- Possible factors have less evidence behind them. They have suggested links to breast cancer, but need more study before solid conclusions can be made.
- Insufficient or inconsistent factors are backed by few studies or the studies to date show mixed results, so there's not enough evidence to allow comment on possible links to breast cancer.

ESTABLISHED AND PROBABLE FACTORS

Established and Probable Factors	
Linked to an increased risk of breast cancer (Listed alphabetically.)	
Age (older)	Breast density (high)
Age at first childbirth (older)	Family history of breast cancer
Age at first period (younger)	Height (taller)
Age at menopause (older)	Hyperplasia (benign breast condition)
Alcohol	IGF-1 hormone levels (high)
Anti-Müllerian hormone (AMH) levels (high)	Light at night and shift work
Ashkenazi Jewish heritage	Lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS)
Being female	Menopausal hormone therapy – estrogen plus progestin
Birth control pills (current or recent use)	Personal history of cancer
Birthweight (high)	Prolactin hormone levels (high)
Blood androgen levels (high)	Race and ethnicity
Blood estrogen levels (high) after menopause	Radiation exposure from medical imaging

Body weight (heavier) after menopause	Radiation treatment during youth
Bone density (high)	Smoking
<i>BRCA1</i> , <i>BRCA2</i> or other high-risk inherited gene mutation	Weight gain
Linked to a decreased risk of breast cancer (Listed alphabetically.)	
Body weight (heavier) before menopause	Exercise (physical activity) after menopause
Breastfeeding	Fruits and vegetables
Carotenoids	
Not related to breast cancer risk (not related to an increased or decreased risk) (Listed alphabetically.)	
Acrylamide (found in foods such as French fries)	Deodorant and antiperspirant use
Abortion	Electromagnetic fields (from utility wires, electric blankets, etc.)
Blood organochlorine levels (exposure to certain types of pesticides and industrial chemicals)	Left-handedness
Bras or underwire bras	Menopausal hormone therapy – estrogen only (less than 10 years of use)
Breast implants	Migraine headaches
Caffeine (coffee and tea)	Sugar
Cell phone use	Trauma to the breast

Breast Cancer Screening & Early Detection

Breast cancer screening and early detection play an important role in your health. Screening tests can help detect breast cancer at an early stage when the chances of survival are highest.

Whether you're ready to get your first screening mammogram or want to know more about follow-up tests after an abnormal finding, learning about breast cancer screening tests and the importance of early breast cancer detection can help you take charge of your health.

Learn About Breast Cancer Screening

The most common tests to detect breast cancer are screening mammograms and clinical breast exams. Screening tests are used to find breast cancer in a person without warning signs or symptoms.

What is a screening mammogram?

A screening mammogram is a test that uses X-rays to create images of the breast. It's the most effective screening test used today to find breast cancer in most women. Screening mammograms can find breast cancer early, sometimes up to 10 years before it could be detected by you or your doctor.

Women at average risk

- Talk with a doctor about which screening tests are right for you .
- Have a mammogram every year starting at age 40 if you're at average risk.
- Have a clinical breast exam at least every three years starting at age 20, and every year starting at age 40.

Women at higher risk

- Talk with a doctor about which screening tests are right for you if you're at higher risk.
- Have a mammogram every year starting at age 40.
- Have a clinical breast exam at least every three years starting at age 20, and every year starting at age 40.

Diagnosing Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is often first suspected when a lump or change is found in the breast or when an abnormal area is seen on a mammogram.

Most of the time, these findings don't turn out to be breast cancer. However, the only way to know for sure is to do follow-up tests.

What is a mammogram?

Mammography is a test that uses X-rays to create images of the breast. These images are called mammograms.

A radiologist trained to read mammograms studies the images and looks for signs of breast cancer.

Digital mammography

In the past, mammogram images were stored on film (film mammography). Now, mammogram images are almost always stored on a computer (digital mammography).

Since digital images are viewed on a computer, they can be lightened or darkened and certain sections can be enlarged and looked at more closely.

How is mammography used?

Screening tests

Breast cancer screening tests are used to find breast cancer in people who have no warning signs or symptoms.

Overall, mammography is the most effective screening test used today to find breast cancer in most women. It can find cancers at an early stage, when the chances of survival are highest.

Follow-up tests after an abnormal finding on a screening test

Sometimes, breast cancer can be ruled out with a follow-up mammogram (diagnostic mammogram), breast ultrasound or breast MRI.

Biopsies

A biopsy removes cells or tissue from a suspicious area in the breast. The cells or tissue are studied under a microscope to see if cancer is present.
Pathology reports

The breast tissue removed during a biopsy is sent to a pathologist. The pathologist studies the tissue and prepares a report of the findings, including the diagnosis.

Breast cancer treatment

The goal of treating early and locally-advanced breast cancers is to get rid of the cancer and keep it from coming back.

Treatment includes some combination of:

- Surgery
- Radiation therapy
- Chemotherapy
- Hormone therapy
- HER2-targeted therapy
- CDK4/6 inhibitor therapy
- Immunotherapy
- PARP inhibitor therapy

These treatments are designed to remove the cancer from the breast and destroy any cancer that might still be in the body.

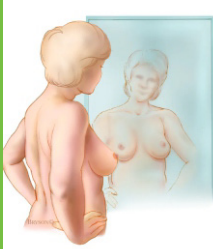
Surgery is the most common treatment for breast cancer. If the cancer is detected early, it may be treated with breast-sparing surgery, usually followed by radiation to destroy remaining cancer cells. Reconstructive surgery can be done during or after initial breast cancer surgery.

Radiation therapy uses high-energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells and shrink tumors. Radiation may be given before or after surgery.

Chemotherapy uses specialised drugs to kill cancer cells. Usually a combination of drugs is given in a pill or by injection. Your healthcare practitioner will determine whether chemotherapy should be administered.

Breast Self Examination

A week after your period ends (or at the same time each month, if you do not have periods), check for any changes in the normal look or feel of your breast. Report any changes to your doctor immediately.



STEP 1

Begin by looking at your breasts in the mirror with your shoulders straight and your arms on your hips.

Here's what you should look for:

- Breasts that are their usual size, shape, and color
- Breasts that are evenly shaped without visible distortion or swelling

If you see any of the following changes, bring them to your doctor's attention:

- Dimpling, puckering, or bulging of the skin
- A nipple that has changed position or an inverted nipple (pushed inward instead of sticking out)
- Redness, soreness, rash, or swelling



STEP 2

Now, raise your arms and look for the same changes.

STEP 3

While you're at the mirror, look for any signs of fluid coming out of one or both nipples (this could be a watery, milky, or yellow fluid or blood).



STEP 5

Finally, feel your breasts while you are standing or sitting. Many women find that the easiest way to feel their breasts is when their skin is wet and slippery, so they like to do this step in the shower. Cover your entire breast, using the same hand movements described in step 4. or yellow fluid or blood).



STEP 4

Next, feel your breasts while lying down, using your right hand to feel your left breast and then your left hand to feel your right breast. Use a firm, smooth touch with the first few finger pads of your hand, keeping the fingers flat and together. Use a circular motion, about the size of a quarter.

Cover the entire breast from top to bottom, side to side — from your collarbone to the top of your abdomen, and from your armpit to your cleavage.

Follow a pattern to be sure that you cover the whole breast. You can begin at the nipple, moving in larger and larger circles until you reach the outer edge of the breast. You can also move your fingers up and down vertically, in rows, as if you were mowing a lawn. This up-and-down approach seems to work best for most women. Be sure to feel all the tissue from the front to the back of your breasts; for the skin and tissue just beneath, use light pressure; use medium pressure for tissue in the middle of your breasts; use firm pressure for the deep tissue in the back. When you've reached the deep tissue, you should be able to feel down to your ribcage.

Some Important Facts About Breast Cancer

- » It is the commonest female cancer in Ghana and is predicted to increase
- » Most women affected in Ghana are between 40 and 49, but those as young as 20 years can get it
- » Men can also get breast cancer, though rare
- » Breast examinations and mammograms help detect breast cancer very early when it can be cured
- » Early Breast cancer is usually NOT painful
- » Early Breast cancer can be removed without removing the whole breast
- » Removing the breast does not lead to death
- » Chemotherapy and radiotherapy do not poison the body
- » Do not waste time using unproven treatments when diagnosed with breast cancer. Seek prompt medical treatment
- » Early detection and effective treatment of Breast Cancer will save your life

Breast Cancer is still active; examine your breasts monthly.

Early Detection is key

**Excerpts from
The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation**



...turning the mortality rate into the survival rate.

GHANA

Run For a Cure Ghana

🏠 No. 1, 6th street Airport
Residential Area Accra, Ghana

☎ +233 50 140 0204

✉ info@runforcureghana.org

🌐 www.runforcureghana.org