

breast cancer

protect yourself: know the facts

What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer begins when cells that are not normal grow inside the breast. It is the most common cancer among Kentucky women, after lung cancer. Men can develop breast cancer too, but it is rare.

What are common symptoms?

- A lump or thickening in or near the breast or underarm area
- Nipple tenderness
- A change in the size or shape of the breast
- A nipple turned inward into the breast
- Skin on the breast or nipple that is scaly, red or swollen, or pitted like the skin of an orange
- Nipple discharge (fluid)

Most often, these problems are caused by other health conditions. Still, if you have any of these problems, it is important to tell your health care provider right away.

Who is most at risk for breast cancer?

Women have a greater chance of getting breast cancer if they:

- Are age 40 or older.
- Have had the disease before or have a close female relative who has had it.
- Have naturally firm breasts.
- Have no children or had a first child at an older age.
- Started menstruation before age 12.
- Went through menopause after age 55.
- Took the hormones estrogen and progestin together.

What is screening?

Screening means checking for signs of disease before symptoms appear. The main ways to check for breast cancer are:

- Mammogram. A mammogram is an x-ray picture of the breast. It can find a cancer when it is too small to be seen or felt. A mammogram is the best way to find breast cancer early.
- Clinical breast exam. This procedure is done in a doctor's office or clinic. A health care provider checks your breasts for lumps and other changes.
- Breast self-exam. In addition to these tests, you can check your own breasts and armpits for changes on the same day once a month. It is important to report anything new or unusual to your health care provider.



Why is screening important?

Screening saves lives. Screening can find cancer early, when it is easiest to treat. One in 8 women will have breast cancer in her lifetime, and finding it early gives someone more treatment choices and a better chance for survival.

How often should women get screened for breast cancer?

Women age 40 or older should have a mammogram and clinical breast exam every year. Younger women who are at higher risk should talk with their health care provider about when to start having mammograms. Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam every three years.

What if I can't afford the tests?

As a result of the Affordable Care Act, most insurance plans cover breast cancer screening tests for women age 40 and older, every 1-2 years. For more detailed information, view the ACA and Cancer Health Professional and Public Factsheets available at www.kycancerc.org. If you do not have insurance, the Kentucky Women's Cancer Screening Program (KWCSPP) may help. Contact your local health department or call the KWCSPP at 1-502-564-3236.

How can I reduce my chance of getting breast cancer?

- Eat a healthy diet.

- Get plenty of exercise.
- Do not smoke.
- Limit alcohol to one drink a day or less.

Where can I get more information?

For information about cancer resources in your community, call your local Kentucky Cancer Program office. For contact information, visit our website at www.kycancerprogram.org.

For information on all types of cancer, call the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service at **1-800-4-CANCER** or go to www.cancer.gov; or call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-ACS-2345** or visit www.cancer.org.

This fact sheet was developed by the Kentucky Cancer Program at the University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center. The information comes from the National Cancer Institute, the American Cancer Society, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Last reviewed May 2015

www.kycancerprogram.org

Kentucky Cancer Program / University of Kentucky/Markey Cancer Center

