

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)

Often, these problems are caused by other health conditions. Women with any of these symptoms should see their health care provider.

Who is most at risk for breast cancer?

- The risk for breast cancer increases with age and most breast cancers occur in women over 50.

- If you have had the disease before or have a close female relative who has had it.
- Women with naturally firm breasts.
- Women who have never given birth or had a first child at an older age.
- Started menstruation before age 12.
- Went through menopause after age 55.
- If you have taken the hormones estrogen and progesterone 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.
- Breast exam. This is done in a health provider's office, or by self-exam checking the breasts and armpits for lumps or changes. 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?

Beginning in their 20s, women should talk with their health care provider about clinical breast exams. Women aged 40 and older should talk with their doctor to decide when to begin mammography screening.

What if I can't afford the tests?

Most cancer screenings are covered by insurance, Medicare and Medicaid. For more detailed information, view the ACA and Cancer Health Professional and Public Factsheets available at www.kycancer.org. If you do not have insurance, the Kentucky Women's Cancer Screening Program (KWCSPP) may help. Call your local health department or the KWCSPP at 1-502-564-3236.

How can I reduce my chance of getting breast cancer?

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

Where can I get more information?

KCP's online tool, **Pathfinder**, can link you to cancer support and services nearest you. Visit www.kycancerprogram.org to find cancer resources in your community, or to contact your regional **Kentucky Cancer Program** office.

For information on all types of cancer, contact:

- **National Cancer Institute**, 1-800-4-CANCER, www.cancer.gov
- **American Cancer Society**, 1-800-ACS-2345, www.cancer.org
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, www.cdc.gov

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.

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www.kycancerprogram.org

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