

## How can you be sure to get a mammogram that's safe and of high quality?

Ask to see the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) certificate that is issued to all facilities that meet high professional standards of safety and quality. Ask your local American Cancer Society office, or call 1-800-ACS-2345, to find out where you can go for a safe, accurate mammogram.

## What if breast cancer is found?

*A woman diagnosed with breast cancer should thoroughly review her treatment options with her doctor before making a decision about therapy.* She has the most treatment options and the best chance for long-term survival when the breast cancer is found early. Treatment for early breast cancer can include lumpectomy (limited surgery which removes the cancer but not the entire breast) followed by radiation therapy, or mastectomy (removal of the entire breast). Additional treatments may include chemotherapy or hormone therapy. Breast reconstruction may be an option after mastectomy.

## What are the chances of surviving breast cancer?

Survival depends on the stage of breast cancer at diagnosis. Eighty-six out of every 100 women diagnosed with breast cancer will survive at least five years. Survival is much better if the disease has not spread, and the prognosis is poorer if the disease has spread by the time it is diagnosed. This is why early detection is so important.

The American Cancer Society is the nationwide community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives, and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy, and service. No matter who you are, we can help. Contact us anytime, day or night, for information and support.

1.800.ACS.2345  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**Hope. Progress. Answers.**



# Breast Cancer Questions and Answers



## Who is at risk for developing breast cancer?

*Every woman is at risk for breast cancer, and her risk increases with age.* Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women. More than three-quarters of all breast cancers occur in women over 50. A woman of 70 is almost twice as likely to develop breast cancer in the next year as a woman of 50.

## But aren't there women with special risks?

Yes. Risk is higher in women with a personal history or whose close female relatives – their mothers or sisters – have had the disease, especially if the relative was diagnosed before menopause. Four out of five women who develop breast cancer, however, have no family history of the disease.

## What can be done to protect against breast cancer?

*Since we don't yet know what causes breast cancer or how to prevent it, the best protection is to detect it as early as possible and treat it promptly.* Researchers are also investigating the possible roles of heredity, environment, lifestyle, and diet.

***For more information about breast cancer, call toll free 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit our Web site at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).***

## What does the American Cancer Society recommend for early detection of breast cancer?

The American Cancer Society and some of the nation's leading health organizations recommend this three-step early detection program:

**1) Have regular mammograms.** Annual mammograms should begin at age 40. Medicare covers mammograms according to your age and your risk.

**2) See your doctor for regular breast exams.** This means at least every three years from age 20 to 39 and every year beginning at age 40.

**3) Practice monthly breast self-exam.** Ask your health care provider to teach you the proper way to do a thorough breast self-exam.

Contact your American Cancer Society for more information on early detection methods.

**These guidelines for the early detection of breast cancer are for women who have no symptoms. They are designed to find breast cancer at the earliest stages when there is the best opportunity to treat it successfully.**

## What are the signs and symptoms of breast cancer?

Symptoms or breast changes to be aware of include any lump, thickening, swelling, dimpling, skin irritation, distortion, retraction of the nipple, scaliness, or pain. A mammogram can pick up changes in the breast that might signal cancer long before it can be felt. Remember – most lumps are not cancerous, but, to be sure, see your doctor even if you've had a mammogram recently.

## What is a mammogram?

*A mammogram is an x-ray picture of the breast taken with a special machine that uses a small amount of radiation.* A specially trained technologist positions your breast between two plastic plates. For a few seconds, pressure is applied to flatten the breast and get a good, clear picture. Two pictures are usually taken of each breast. Some women report a little discomfort, but it only lasts a few seconds, and firm compression is an important part of a quality exam. The entire mammography exam takes about 15 minutes. A specialist, called a radiologist, will read the mammogram to see if there are any suspicious areas.

