

Breast Screening Life Plan

Women 20 to 39

- Know what looks and feels normal for you so you can notice any unusual changes in your breasts.
- See your healthcare provider regularly for a health check-up.

Women 40 to 49

- Speak with your healthcare provider about your risk of breast cancer and the risks and benefits of screening mammograms.
- Have your breasts examined every year by your healthcare provider as part of your regular health check-up.
- Check your breasts regularly for unusual changes.

Women 50 to 69

- Be sure to get a screening mammogram at least every two years, as decided by you and your healthcare provider.
- Have your breasts examined every year by your healthcare provider as part of your regular health check-up.
- Check your breasts regularly for unusual changes.

Women 70+

- Speak with your healthcare provider about whether you should continue to have regular mammograms.
- Have your breasts examined every year by your healthcare provider as part of your regular health check-up.
- Check your breasts regularly for unusual changes.

Knowing what looks and feels normal for you

The breast changes listed below do not necessarily mean you have breast cancer. If you notice these changes, see your healthcare provider right away:

- a lump in your breast or armpit
- nipple turned inward, if it isn't usually
- crusting, bleeding or a rash on your nipple
- nipple discharge
- dimpling or thickening of skin in one area of your breast

Remember

- 80% of women with breast cancer have no family history.
- Living a healthy lifestyle can reduce your risk of developing breast cancer.
- Screening mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early, when treatment may work better. If you are eligible, book an appointment now!

About the Alberta Breast Cancer Screening Program

The Alberta Breast Cancer Screening Program (ABCSP) is coordinated by Alberta Health Services in partnership with the Alberta Society of Radiologists. The ABCSP mails your screening mammogram results to you. The program also supports women and their healthcare providers by sending reminders when women are overdue for screening mammograms.

To get letters from the ABCSP your name and address must be up to date with Alberta Health and Wellness; call 310-0000 (toll free) then dial 780-427-1432.

Screening is one of the best things you can do for yourself to find breast cancer early. Breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screening saves lives.

For more information, please contact

Cancer Screening Programs

Phone 1-866-727-3926

Fax 1-888-944-3388

screeningforlife.ca

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BREAST SCREENING

The Basics of Breast Cancer



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What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer begins when abnormal cells grow in the breast. These cells may form lumps called tumours. A tumour that is cancerous is called malignant. A tumour that is not cancerous is called benign. A benign tumour does not spread to other parts of the body. It is not usually life-threatening. A tumour that is malignant can spread to other parts of the body and can be life threatening.

How common is breast cancer?

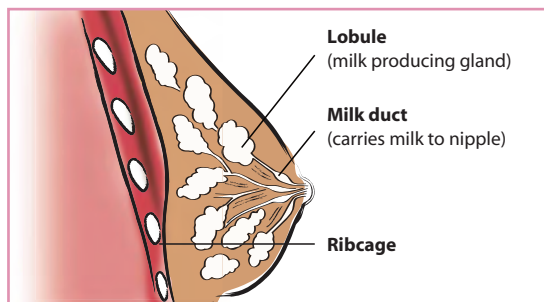
Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in women. It is the second leading cause of female cancer deaths. 1 in 8 Alberta women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. Screening and improved treatment have decreased breast cancer deaths in Alberta over the last few decades.

When cancer is found early, it is usually very small and limited to the place where it started. Treatment for cancer found early may work better than for cancer that has already spread.

What are the common types of breast cancer?

Most breast cancer starts in the cells that line the milk ducts (ductal carcinoma) although some start in the cells that line the milk-producing glands (lobular carcinoma). Cancer affecting other parts of the breast is less common.

The term carcinoma in situ means the cancer cells are only in the layer of cells they began in and have not spread to surrounding breast tissue. A ductal or lobular carcinoma that has grown into the surrounding breast tissue is called invasive.



What are the risk factors for breast cancer?

Not all women have the same chance of developing breast cancer. Certain risk factors affect the probability that a woman will develop the disease.

Risk factors you can't change

Gender: Women are about 100 times more likely to develop breast cancer than men.

Age: The risk of breast cancer increases as women get older. About 75% of women diagnosed with breast cancer in Alberta are 50 years or older.

Family History: Having a mother, sister, or daughter diagnosed with breast cancer increases a woman's risk of breast cancer. However, 80% of women who develop breast cancer have no family history.

Genetic Changes: Specific changes in certain genes (BRCA1, BRCA2, and others) can increase a woman's risk of breast cancer. These changes are thought to be inherited. These genetic changes are rare and make up less than 10% of all breast cancer.

Previous Diagnosis of Breast Cancer: Women who have had cancer in one breast have an increased risk of developing a new cancer in the other breast.

Breast Density: Women with denser breast tissue have a higher risk of breast cancer. Dense breast tissue also makes it harder on a mammogram to find breast cancer early.

Menstrual History: Women who started menstruating (had their periods) before age 12 and/or went through menopause after age 55 have a higher risk of breast cancer.

Radiation Therapy to the Chest: Women who were treated by radiation to the chest for another cancer when they were younger are at increased risk of breast cancer. The younger a woman was when she had her treatment, the higher her risk of breast cancer later in life.

Lifestyle factors affecting breast cancer risk

Reproductive History: Women who have never had a child or who had their first child after age 30 are at increased risk of breast cancer.

Long-Term Hormone Replacement Therapy: Women who use combination estrogen plus progestin menopausal hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for more than 5 years have a higher risk of developing breast cancer. Within 5 years of stopping combination estrogen-progestin therapy, a woman's risk of breast cancer returns to that of the general population.

Body Weight: The risk of getting breast cancer after menopause is higher in women who are overweight or obese.

Physical Activity: Being physically inactive throughout life increases a woman's risk of breast cancer.

Alcohol: The more alcohol a woman drinks, the greater her risk of breast cancer.

Tobacco: Active smoking increases a woman's risk of breast cancer. Studies show that second-hand smoke increases breast cancer risk for women who have not yet been through menopause.

What can you do to reduce your risk of developing breast cancer?

	YES	NO
• Be physically active	✓	
• Stay at a healthy weight	✓	
• Limit the amount of alcohol you drink	✓	
• Don't smoke	✓	
• Speak with your healthcare provider about limiting the long-term use of combined estrogen-progestin HRT	✓	

Be sure to follow the Breast Screening Life Plan (see reverse).