

Do men get breast cancer?

Since men have breast tissue, they can get breast cancer. But, breast cancer in men is rare. About one percent of all breast cancer cases in the U.S. occur in men. It may sound like a small number, but that's still 2,240 new cases expected among men this year. Also, 410 men in the U.S. are expected to die from breast cancer this year.

Common symptoms:

Any change in the breast, chest area or nipple can be a warning sign of breast cancer in men, such as:

- lump, hard knot or thickening in the breast (usually painless, but may be tender)
- dimpling, puckering or redness of the skin of the breast
- itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
- pulling in of the nipple (inverted nipple) or other parts of the breast
- nipple discharge

Many men do not know they can get breast cancer. They may not notice a change or think it is important. They may be embarrassed to say anything. This can delay diagnosis. So, breast cancers may be found later in men. If it is found at the same stage, survival rates are similar for men and women. The male breast is much smaller than the female breast. This makes it more likely that cancer will spread to the chest wall. Finding breast cancer early can improve survival. See your provider if you have any lumps or changes in your chest area.



A man's risk

Known factors that increase the risk of male breast cancer include:

- Klinefelter's syndrome (a genetic condition related to high levels of estrogen in the body)
- BRCA2 gene mutation
- family history of breast cancer (especially with a BRCA2 mutation)
- getting older
- chronic liver disorders
- heavy alcohol use
- obesity and
- exposure to large amounts of radiation early in life

How do I know if I have breast cancer?

To diagnose breast cancer, a complete medical history, clinical breast exam, mammogram and biopsy are needed.

The types of breast cancer found in men are the same as those found in women. The stages and patterns of how the disease spreads are also the same.

Treatment

Treatment for breast cancer in men is the same as for women. It can involve some combination of surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, hormone or targeted therapy.

The main treatment for male breast cancer is mastectomy. This type of surgery removes the entire breast. Lumpectomy (also called breast conserving surgery) is rarely used because of the small size of the male breast. Some men may have radiation following surgery. This will depend on the stage of their breast cancer.

Since most male breast cancers are hormone receptor-positive, hormone therapy (with tamoxifen) is often used first. Chemotherapy may be given before tamoxifen depending on the stage. For men with hormone receptor-negative breast cancer, chemotherapy is usually used.

Men with HER2/neu-positive breast cancers may be treated with trastuzumab (Herceptin) plus chemotherapy with a taxane.

For more information, please refer to the fact sheets on *Breast Cancer Detection* and *Breast Cancer Surgery*.

Resources

While breast cancer is rare among men, information and other resources are available. These organizations can help you get the information and support you need.

Susan G. Komen®
1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)

American Cancer Society
1-800-ACS-2345
www.cancer.org

Asking the right questions

When first diagnosed with breast cancer, many men are in shock. After all, breast cancer is a women's disease, right? No, it's not. Breast cancer can happen to anyone. Don't let the surprise of the diagnosis distract you from the seriousness of this disease. It is important that you ask questions. Gather as much information as you can to make informed decisions about your treatment.

Here are some questions you can ask your doctor:

1. What type of breast cancer do I have? Is it non-invasive (has not spread beyond the ducts or lobules where it began) or invasive (cancer has spread to surrounding areas)?
2. What is the stage of my cancer?
3. What treatments do you recommend for me? Why?
4. How can I prepare for treatment? What side effects should I expect? Which ones should I report to you?
5. What is my prognosis (chance for recovery)?

For other questions to ask your doctor, see our full series of 17 Questions to ask the Doctor at www.komen.org/questions

Related fact sheets in this series:

- Breast Cancer Detection
- Breast Cancer Surgery
- Treatment Choices — An Overview

The above list of resources is only a suggested resource and is not a complete listing of breast cancer materials or information. The information contained herein is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional. Komen does not endorse, recommend or make any warranties or representations regarding the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, quality or non-infringement of any of the materials, products or information provided by the organizations referenced herein.