

WHAT EVERY

WOMAN

NEEDS TO KNOW





NATIONAL  
BREAST  
CANCER  
FOUNDATION, INC.®

## You have received this eBook because we care about you.

By using this eBook and reading about breast care, you will find out:

- What the different types of breast cancer screenings are
- When to perform and schedule screenings for breast cancer
- How to assess your risk
- How to prepare for a mammogram
- What resources are available if you are unable to afford these life-saving screenings

## Why is this important?

One in eight women are diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. However, with early detection and treatment, you can greatly improve your chance of survival. We have created this resource to empower you with the tools and information you need to take charge of your health.

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# Your Breast Health Plan

## 3 Steps to Early Detection

Early detection means finding the cancer before it spreads to other parts of the body. Although breast cancer cannot be completely prevented, early detection provides the greatest possibility of successful treatment. By following these three steps, you will help increase your chance of detecting cancer early.



### BREAST SELF-AWARENESS

Breast self-awareness can help you become familiar with how your breasts normally look and feel. Knowing this will help you identify any changes in your breasts that should be reported to your health care professional promptly. If you find a lump, schedule an appointment with your doctor, but don't panic - 8 out of 10 lumps are not cancerous.

Changes to look for include:

- A lump or thickening in or near the breast or in the underarm area
- A change in the size or shape of the breast
- Dimpling or puckering in the skin of the breast
- A nipple turned inward into the breast
- Discharge (fluid) from the nipple
- Scaly, red, or swollen skin on the breast, nipple, or areola (the dark area of skin at the center of the breast)

You should see your health care provider about any of these symptoms. Often these symptoms are not due to cancer, but if you notice any changes in your body, tell your health care provider immediately so that the problems can be diagnosed and treated.

## 2 WELL-WOMAN EXAM

It is recommended that women visit their family physician or gynecologist each year for an annual Well-Woman Exam. In addition to a routine pelvic exam and pap smear, the doctor may perform a brief breast exam to check for abnormalities.

The Well-Woman Exam is a great opportunity for you to discuss with your health care provider any questions or concerns you have regarding your breast health. For example, your doctor may help you to determine the most appropriate frequency for your early detection steps.

## 3 MAMMOGRAM

In its early stages, breast cancer doesn't usually cause symptoms. NCF recommends that women ages 40 and older get a mammogram every year. A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. It is a safe way to detect cancerous tumors and other abnormal breast conditions, and women who have screening mammograms have a lower chance of dying from breast cancer than women who do not have screening mammograms.

Mammograms can detect cancer or other problems before a lump becomes large enough to be detectable to the touch. They provide an effective way to find breast cancer in its early stages when treatment is usually the most successful. Mammograms are considered safe, quick, and relatively painless.



## Healthy Habits

Leading a healthy lifestyle is recommended to protect your overall health and may help reduce your risk for certain cancers. Here are a few tips to follow:

- Eat five servings or more of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Get regular physical activity.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Limit alcohol intake to no more than one drink per day.
- Do not smoke, or quit smoking.

## Creating Your Plan

Women can be diagnosed with breast cancer at any age. When breast cancer is detected early (localized stage), the 5-year relative survival rate is almost 100%. This is why it is so important for you to schedule regular exams. Below you will find some general guidelines for breast cancer early detection methods. *You should always consult with your doctor to create a screening schedule that is most appropriate for you.*

EXAM	AGE	FREQUENCY
Breast Self-Awareness	18+	Regularly/Monthly
Well-Woman Exam	21+	Yearly
Mammogram	40+	Yearly

Again, please discuss with your health care provider how often you should have breast exams. Women with a first-degree relative who has been diagnosed with breast cancer (parent, sibling, child) may need to begin mammography earlier and should consult their health care provider about the timing and frequency of exams.

## Assessing Your Personal Risk

A risk factor is a characteristic that increases the likelihood of developing cancer. If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, it may be time to talk to your doctor about getting a mammogram.

- I am a woman aged 40 or above:      Yes      No
- I have been previously diagnosed with breast cancer or ovarian cancer:      Yes      No
- My mother, sister, and/or daughter has been diagnosed with breast cancer:      Yes      No
- I have tested positive for a gene mutation that is associated with higher risk of breast cancer (i.e. BRCA1 or BRCA2):      Yes      No

## Where to Get a Mammogram

Free or low-cost mammograms are available to women with low incomes and who are uninsured or underinsured. Here are some resources to help you secure a free mammogram if you qualify.

### Resources

- **National Mammography Program**  
[nbcf.org/national-mammography-program](http://nbcf.org/national-mammography-program)  
National Breast Cancer Foundation’s National Mammography Program (NMP) provides funding to facilities across the United States so they are able to provide free or low-cost mammograms to women in need.
- **National Breast & Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program**  
[cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp](http://cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp)  
CDC’s National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP) provides access to breast and cervical cancer screening services to women in need in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.



- The National Cancer Institute

[cancer.gov](https://www.cancer.gov)

The National Cancer Institute can direct you to a local resource for low-cost mammograms. You can call them at 1.800.422.6237. Be sure to have your zip code ready.

Even if you do not have documentation, there is help available.

### **Who to Talk to:**

Many facilities have nurse or patient navigators who will help you obtain and complete the forms you need to receive a mammogram.

# Preparing for Your Appointment

## Questions to Ask Before a Mammogram

Before you get a mammogram, you may want to ask your health care provider the following questions:

What should I do to prepare for my mammogram?

Who will receive my mammogram report? Can you send it to my other doctors?

How long will the mammogram take?

Do you have my previous mammogram results?

When will I learn about the results?

Who will notify me of my results?

What happens if the mammogram shows something abnormal?

Will I have to pay anything for a mammogram?

What papers do I need to bring to see if I qualify for a free mammogram?

## Symptom Checklist & Medical History

Complete this checklist if you have noticed any changes in your breast. This will help you discuss the changes with your health care provider.

### I have noticed these breast changes:

- A lump or thickening in or near the breast or in the underarm area
 

Left Breast	Right Breast
-------------	--------------
  
- A change in the size or shape of the breast
 

Left Breast	Right Breast
-------------	--------------
  
- Dimpling or puckering in the skin of the breast
 

Left Breast	Right Breast
-------------	--------------
  
- A nipple turned inward into the breast
 

Left Breast	Right Breast
-------------	--------------
  
- Discharge (fluid) from the nipple
 

Left Breast	Right Breast
-------------	--------------
  
- Scaly, red, or swollen skin on the breast, nipple, or areola (the dark area of skin at the center of the breast)
 

Left Breast	Right Breast
-------------	--------------
  
- Other changes:

**If you noticed any changes in your breast, this is the information you should discuss with your health care provider:**

These are the breast changes or problems I have noticed:

This is what the breast change looks or feels like: (Is the lump hard or soft? Does your breast feel tender or swollen? How big is the lump? What color is the nipple discharge?)

This is where the breast change is: (What part of the breast feels different? Do both breasts feel different or only one?)

This is when I first noticed the breast change:

Since then, this is the change I've noticed: (Has it stayed the same or gotten worse?)

## Share your personal medical history:

I've had these breast problems in the past:

These are the breast exams and tests that I have had:

My last mammogram was on this date:

My last menstrual period began on this date:

Right now, I:

Have breast implants

Am pregnant

Am breastfeeding

I've had this type of cancer before:

## Share your family medical history:

My family members have had these breast problems or diseases:

These family members had breast cancer:

They were this age when they were diagnosed with breast cancer:

## Preparing for a Mammogram

### **I made an appointment - now how do I prepare for my visit to the doctor?**

Make sure you have all the correct documentation with you.

You will need:

- Proof of address
- Proof of ID
- Household income information

### **Before Your Mammogram**

- Gather the above documents.
- Schedule the mammogram a few days after your menstrual cycle. This is when your breasts are least sensitive.
- Make sure you have a list of where and when you have had any previous mammograms, as well as the results of those mammograms.

### **The Day of Your Mammogram**

- Do not use any deodorant, lotion, cream or powder on your underarms or breasts. These will sometimes interfere with the mammogram reading.
- Provide your doctor with the documents you gathered.
- Provide your doctor with the symptom checklist.
- Describe any breast symptoms or problems you are having.
- Take this journal with you to help you ask questions and take notes.

## During Your Mammogram

Try to relax your entire body. During your mammogram, you will likely feel pressure for a few brief moments.

## After Your Mammogram

- If you do not hear from your health care professional within 10 days, consult him or her to ask for your results.
- If your mammogram results are normal, be sure to ask your health care provider when he or she feels that you should have your next mammogram, based on your age and family history.
- Be sure to ask your doctor if you have dense breasts and how this may affect your mammogram results.
- Next Mammogram Needed on:



## Abnormal Results

### What if they tell me that my mammogram was abnormal?

If your mammogram is abnormal, do not panic. An abnormal mammogram does not always mean that there is cancer.

If your screening mammogram shows an abnormality, you will need to have additional tests to be able to tell whether or not the abnormality is cancer.

### Your doctor may order some of these tests:

- **DIAGNOSTIC MAMMOGRAM**  
An additional mammogram that focuses on a specific area of the breast.
- **ULTRASOUND**  
An imaging test that uses sound waves to create a picture of your breast. The pictures may show whether a lump is solid or filled with fluid. A cyst will be fluid-filled and is not cancer. A solid mass may be cancer.
- **MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING (MRI)**  
A test that uses a powerful magnet linked to a computer that creates detailed pictures of the breast.
- **BIOPSY**  
A test in which fluid or tissue is removed from your breast to help find out if there is cancer.

## Questions to Ask Your Doctor If Your Mammogram Was Abnormal

What tests will you perform to see if the abnormality is cancer?

When will I find out the results?

Will my insurance cover the additional tests?

Will Medicare cover the additional tests?

Will I have to pay anything?

If the abnormality is not cancer, is it something I need treatment for?

When should I have a follow-up mammogram?

## Questions to Ask Your Doctor if Breast Cancer is Diagnosed

To confirm a positive diagnosis of breast cancer, cells or tissues will be removed by surgery or with a needle from the abnormal area of the breast to be examined. This procedure is called a biopsy. If a biopsy confirms cancer, your doctor may perform several other tests to see if the breast cancer has spread to other areas of your body.

What did my biopsy or needle aspiration show?

What kind of breast cancer do I have?

What stage of breast cancer am I in?

What size is the tumor?

Has the cancer spread to my lymph nodes or other parts of my body (metastasized)?

What are my treatment options?

What types of treatment would you recommend?

How much time do I have to make decisions about my treatment choices?

Who will coordinate my care?

- Health care Provider:
- Office Phone Number:
- Facility Address:

What other tests will be done to check if the cancer has spread?

Will you refer me to a doctor who specializes in treating people with cancer (oncologist)?

If so, what is the contact information for the oncologist?

- Facility Name:
- Oncologist Name:
- Office Phone Number:
- Facility Address:
- Appointment Date:
- Appointment Time:

What is my chance for recovery (prognosis)?

# About



## Helping Women Now®

National Breast Cancer Foundation's (NBCF) mission is to help women now by providing help and inspiring hope to those affected by breast cancer through early detection, education and support services. NBCF was started in 1991 by Janelle Hail, a breast cancer survivor, and has received the highest rating of four stars from Charity Navigator for twelve years. Learn more at [nbcf.org](http://nbcf.org).

### What We Do



#### NATIONAL MAMMOGRAPHY PROGRAM (NMP)

We partner with medical facilities in all 50 states to provide free mammograms and diagnostic breast care services to women in need.

For a list of facilities in our network, please visit:

[nbcf.org/national-mammography-program](http://nbcf.org/national-mammography-program)



#### PATIENT NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

Patient navigators in our NMP help women navigate the health care system and overcome the barriers of cost, fear, and misinformation.



#### BEYOND THE SHOCK®

Beyond The Shock (BTS) is an online educational resource for those affected by breast cancer. BTS includes educational videos, stories, and a question & answer section where people can submit questions to a community of breast cancer survivors. It is especially recommended for newly diagnosed women and their loved ones in order to find support and gain a better understanding of the disease.

Visit [BeyondTheShock.com](http://BeyondTheShock.com) or download the comprehensive iPhone app in the iTunes App Store. Beyond The Shock is currently available in English, Spanish, French, Mandarin Chinese, and Portuguese.

## Learn More & Get Involved



Visit [www.nbcf.org](http://www.nbcf.org) to learn more about National Breast Cancer Foundation's mission and programs.



Become an NBCF volunteer. Find out how you can continue educating women in your community by contacting our NBCF volunteer team at [volunteer@nbcf.org](mailto:volunteer@nbcf.org).



Connect with us to share the message of hope by following our social media channels:

- “Like” us on Facebook:  
[facebook.com/nationalbreastcancer](https://facebook.com/nationalbreastcancer)
- Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Pinterest](#):  
[@nbcf](#)