~3.7 million women are living with breast cancer in the United States

2nd leading cause of cancer deaths in women

Breast cancer occurs when cells in the breast grow abnormally – dividing and multiplying unmanageably. While breast cancers occur in both men and women, they occur disproportionately in women—up to 100 times more often. A woman’s risk of developing breast cancer in her lifetime is 1 in 8.

Rate of New Breast Cancers Among Females (per 100,000)

- White: 130.8
- Black: 123.6
- American Indian & Alaska Native: 106.1
- Asian & Pacific Islander: 103.9
- Hispanic: 94.8

Risk Factors
- Biological sex
- Age (50+ years)
- Certain genetic mutations (e.g., BRCA1, BRCA2)*
- Having dense breasts
- Personal history of breast cancer or breast disease
- Family history of breast or ovarian cancer

Other risk factors include reproductive history, obesity, previous exposure to radiation therapy, and alcohol consumption.

Screening Tests

Women who are at average risk (no personal or family history) for breast cancer have the option to begin annual screening at age 40. Those age 45-54 should get screened every year, and after age 55, every 1 or 2 years as long as they are in good health.

Mammogram takes X-ray images of the breast

Digital breast tomosynthesis is a 3D mammogram, often used on denser breasts

Breast MRI uses a contrast dye and magnets to make images of breast tissue

CLINICAL BREAST EXAMS are no longer recommended for breast cancer screening among average-risk women at any age. However, it is important for women to be familiar with how their breasts normally look and feel, and report any changes to their health care provider immediately.

Women who are HIGH RISK for breast cancer should get an breast MRI and a mammogram every year, starting at age 30.*
Breast Biopsy
If the screening tests suggest possible cancer, a biopsy (sample of breast tissue) is taken to determine the presence of cancer cells. The sample is analyzed, often for certain biomarkers or characteristics that are associated with different types of breast cancer. These diagnostic tests help determine the proper course of treatment for an individual’s breast cancer type.

Impacts on Women
- In recent years, incidence rates of breast cancer in women have increased by 0.5% per year.
- The lifetime risk of breast cancer for men is 0.13% versus 12.9% for women. Risk increases with age, with most breast cancer diagnoses occurring after age 50.
- Black women have a higher risk of developing breast cancer before the age of 40 - their median age at diagnosis is 60 years, compared to 63 years for white women.
- White, Asian, and Pacific Islander women are more likely to be diagnosed with localized breast cancer than women from other racial/ethnic groups.

Policy Opportunities
There remain ample opportunities to inform prevention, early detection, treatment, and survival of breast cancer. Congress must continue to prioritize robust, sustained investments in this research, education, and public program infrastructure.

- Legislative Opportunities:
  - **Find it Early Act** (H.R. 3086) would provide health coverage with no cost-sharing for additional breast screenings for certain individuals at greater risk of breast cancer.
  - **Nancy Gardener Sewell Medicare Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act** (H.R. 2407) would provide Medicare coverage of multi-cancer early detection screening tests, including for breast cancer.
  - **Jeanette Acosta Invest in Women’s Health Act of 2021** (S.1063/H.R.2216) would provide women with increased access to preventive and life-saving cancer screening.

- **Continued Authorization of the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP).** NBCCEDP, a partnership between CDC and state health departments, provides life-saving breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services to low-income, uninsured, or underinsured people in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, six territories, and 13 tribes or tribal organization.

References

* Some women, including those who have relatives with breast or ovarian cancer or are of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry BRCA gene mutations, have a higher risk for BRCA gene mutations than others.
** Recommendation of the American Cancer Society.