



Breast Cancer: Fact & Fiction

Myth: All breast lumps are cancerous.

Fact: Eight out of ten breast lumps are benign (not cancerous).

Myth: Only women get breast cancer.

Fact: Nearly 2,000 men are diagnosed with breast cancer each year.

Myth: Mammograms cause breast cancer to spread.

Fact: Neither the radiation nor the pressure placed on the breast from the mammogram can cause breast cancer to spread.

Myth: If your grandmother, mother or sister had breast cancer, you will get it too.

Fact: Only 15 to 20 percent of women with breast cancer have a family history of the disease. (Having a family history does, however, increase your risk.)

Myth: If no one in your family has had breast cancer, you won't get it either.

Fact: Eighty to 85 percent of women with breast cancer have no family history of the disease.

Myth: Your genetic risk of getting breast cancer comes only from your mother's side of the family.

Fact: Half of your genes come from your mother and half from your father. Therefore, both sides of your family influence your risk equally.

Myth: Breast cancer is a death sentence.

Fact: Up to 98 percent of women survive at least five years when their cancer is caught early, and 85 to 90 percent survive at least 10 years.

Myth: Only "old" women get breast cancer.

Fact: 25 percent of women with breast cancer are younger than 50. Recent studies have shown more young women are getting aggressive forms of breast cancer. Reasons for this upswing are not yet known.

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Myth: Eating high-fat foods causes breast cancer.

Fact: Excess body weight is the risk factor, not the high fat foods themselves, although fatty foods contribute to excess body weight. Excess body weight increases estrogen production. Estrogen stimulates the growth of both normal breast cells and cells with cancer producing DNA mutations.

Myth: A mutation in your BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene means you will get breast cancer.

Fact: Although changes in these genes predispose men and women to an increased risk of breast cancer, only 5 percent to 10 percent of breast cancer patients have the mutation.

Myth: If no sign of cancer shows up on your mammogram, you definitely don't have breast cancer.

Fact: Mammography catches the majority of breast cancers, but not all. In addition to mammography, women should have their breasts examined annually by their health care provider and perform monthly self-examinations.

Myth: Cancerous breast lumps are painless.

Fact: Cancerous breast lumps are usually painless, but not always.

Myth: There's nothing you can do to prevent getting breast cancer.

Fact: Research summarized by MayoClinic.com indicates that you can definitely minimize your risk of getting breast cancer by: Maintaining a healthy weight; avoiding alcohol or limiting its use to less than one drink per day; getting regular exercise; minimizing the duration of hormone therapy; and limiting your use of pesticides and antibiotics.



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