

Do men get breast cancer?

Breast cancer in men is rare, but it does happen. After all, men have breast tissue. The overall ratio of female to male breast cancer in the U.S. is 100 to 1.¹ Although it sounds like a small number, 2,190 men are expected to be diagnosed, and 410 are expected to die from the disease in the U.S. in 2012.¹

Common symptoms of male breast cancer:

- a lump in the chest area
- skin dimpling or puckering
- nipple changes

Because breast cancer is much more common in women, many men do not realize they can develop this disease. This can delay diagnosis and as a result, some cancers are not found until they have progressed to a later stage. However, when cancer is found at the same stage among men and women, the survival rates are similar. Because the male breast is much smaller than the female breast, it is more likely the disease will spread to the chest wall. For this reason, it is important to find the cancer early for successful treatment. See your doctor right away if you have any lumps or changes in your chest area.

¹ American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts & Figures 2012



A man's risk

Known factors that increase your risk of breast cancer include:

- a genetic condition such as Klinefelter's syndrome that is associated with high estrogen levels
- family members (male or female) with breast cancer, especially with a BRCA2 mutation
- chronic liver disorders, alcoholism and obesity
- getting older

How do I know if I have breast cancer?

The steps used to diagnose breast cancer in men include a complete medical history, clinical breast exam, mammogram and biopsy.

The types of breast cancer found in men are the same as those found in women, as are the stages and patterns of how the disease spreads. Thus, treatments for breast cancer in men are the same as for women. It generally involves some combination of surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy or hormone therapy. The main treatment for male breast cancer is mastectomy.

A mastectomy is a surgical procedure to remove the breast with the cancerous tumor. Lumpectomy (also called breast conserving surgery) is rarely used because of the small size of the male breast. Some men may have radiation therapy following surgery. Since most male breast cancers are hormone receptor-positive, tamoxifen is usually the first hormone therapy used. Depending on the stage of the cancer, chemotherapy may be given before hormone therapy begins. For more information, please refer to the fact sheets on *Breast Cancer Detection and Breast Surgery*.

Resources

Although breast cancer is rare among men, information and other resources are available to help men with breast cancer. The organizations listed below will help you get the information and support you need.

Susan G. Komen for the Cure®
1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)
www.komen.org

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

Y-Me™
1-800-221-2141 (English) or
1-800-986-9505 (Spanish)
www.y-me.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 its not. Do not let the surprise of this diagnosis distract you from the seriousness of this disease. It is very important for you to ask questions and gather as much information as you can in order to make informed decisions about your treatment. Here are some questions to ask your doctor:

1. What type of breast cancer do I have? Is it non-invasive (cancerous cells still within the area in which it started and has not spread to nearby tissue) or invasive (cancer has spread into surrounding breast tissue)?
2. What is the stage of my cancer?
3. What treatments are appropriate for my type of cancer? Which one do you recommend and why?
4. How can I prepare for treatment? What side effects should I expect? What should I report to you?
5. What is my prognosis (expected outcome)?

See our full series of 14 Questions to ask the Doctor at www.komen.org/questions

Related fact sheets in this series:

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