

## Reduce your risk

- ✿ Limit your alcohol intake, or better still, avoid it altogether.
- ✿ Keep active – exercise for at least 30 to 60 minutes each day.
- ✿ Eat well – a healthy diet will help you maintain a healthy body weight.

This leaflet contains essential information about finding breast cancer early (when treatment has the best chance of success), as well as tips for reducing your risk.

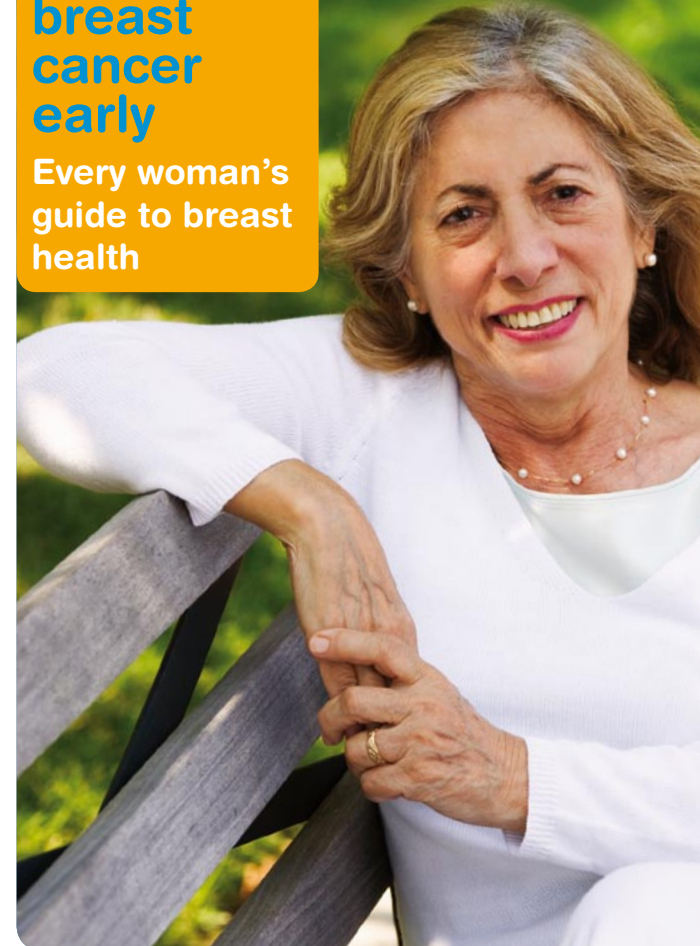
 Cancer Council  
**Helpline**  
**13 11 20**  
[www.cancervic.org.au](http://www.cancervic.org.au)

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## Finding breast cancer early

Every woman's guide to breast health



## Be breast aware

- ✿ Get to know the normal look and feel of your breasts.
- ✿ See your doctor if you notice any unusual changes.
- ✿ If you are aged 50 to 69, have a free mammogram at BreastScreen every two years.

More women survive breast cancer today thanks to earlier detection and better treatments. However, it is still the most common cancer among Australian women, with about 12,000 women diagnosed each year.

## Know what's normal for you

It's important to be familiar with the look and feel of your breasts and to know what's normal for you. That way you are more likely to notice any unusual changes which could be, but are not always, a sign of breast cancer.

- > Get to know the usual shape of your breasts by regularly looking in the mirror.
- > Become familiar with the normal feel of your breasts at different times of the month. You might find this easiest in the shower or bath, lying in bed, or getting dressed.
- > Feel all the breast tissue, from the collar bone to below the bra line, and under the armpit.
- > Use the pads of your fingers to feel near the surface and deeper in the breast.

There is no right or wrong way to feel your breasts – it's important to find a way that works for you. Women of all ages should be familiar with their breasts, but it becomes more important as you get older because the risk of breast cancer increases with age.

## Changes to look for

It is often women themselves who first notice a change in their breast, which in some cases is a symptom of breast cancer.

**See your doctor straight away if you feel or see any of the following changes:**

- > A lump, lumpiness or thickening in the breast or armpit.
- > Changes in the skin – dimpling, puckering or redness.
- > Changes in the nipple – pointing in rather than out (unless it has always been this way), a change in direction or an unusual discharge.
- > An area that feels different from the rest.
- > Unusual pain.

**Nine out of ten breast changes are not breast cancer, however it is always important to have any changes checked out straight away by your doctor.**

## Breast cancer screening

Breast screening can find cancers at an early stage, when they are too small for you to notice or when you don't have any symptoms.

In Australia, all women aged 50 to 69 are invited to have a free mammogram (breast x-ray) at BreastScreen every two years, as this is when screening has been shown to be most effective. Women aged 40 to 49, or 70 and over, may also be screened if they wish.

**Book an appointment with BreastScreen by calling 13 20 50 or visit [www.breastscreen.org.au](http://www.breastscreen.org.au).**



## Breast cancer risk

As well as being a woman, getting older is the strongest risk factor for breast cancer: more than 70 per cent of cases occur in women over 50. Breast cancer is rare in women younger than 40, however it is important for all women to be breast aware. Other factors which increase your risk include having one or more close relatives who have had breast cancer, particularly before the age of 50, or if you've had breast cancer in the past.

## Reducing your risk

**While some risk factors are out of your control, adopting a healthy lifestyle can reduce your risk:**

**Limit alcohol** The more alcoholic drinks you have each day, the greater your risk of breast cancer. It is therefore a good idea to reduce your alcohol intake, or better still, avoid it altogether.

**Be physically active** An active lifestyle has been shown to reduce the risk of breast cancer. Try to do at least 30 minutes of vigorous activity or one hour of moderate exercise most days.

**Maintain a healthy weight** Strive to keep your waistline to less than 85cm to lower your risk of breast cancer. Maintain a healthy weight by combining regular exercise with a healthy diet, which is low in fat and high in fresh fruit and vegetables.