



Common breast cancer myths

MYTH
Breast cancer is common in young women.

FACT

Although it does happen, breast cancer is relatively rare in women in their 20s and 30s. However, it is important for women of all ages to be familiar with how their breasts normally look and feel and to see their doctor if they notice any unusual changes.

MYTH
Regular mammograms are recommended for all women.

FACT

Regular mammograms (x-rays of breast tissue) are not recommended for women under 40. The breasts of younger women have more glandular tissue, resulting in 'dense' breast tissue which makes it difficult to see the signs of breast cancer on a mammogram. That's why it is important for young women to be aware of the normal look, shape and feel of their breasts and see their doctor if they notice any changes.

A regular mammogram every two years is recommended for all women over 50.

MYTH
Breast cancer is mainly a genetic disease.

FACT

Most breast cancers are not inherited. Less than five per cent of all breast cancers are caused by an inherited gene fault. Talk to your doctor if you are worried about a family history of breast cancer.

Remember

You can take charge of your breast health:

- Become familiar with the normal look and feel of your breasts.
- See your doctor straight away if you notice a change in your breasts.
- Maintain a healthy diet and body size.
- Limit or avoid alcohol.
- Have regular mammograms if you're over 50.
- Exercise regularly.

Do you still have questions about breast cancer?

Call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20, or visit our website:

www.cancervic.org.au



Cancer Council Helpline 131120
www.cancervic.org.au



your breast health a guide for young women



Leading
the fight...



your breast health

There's a lot of information around about breast cancer, and sometimes it's hard to know what to believe. As a young woman it is important to understand your own risk of breast cancer, so here are the facts...

It is important for women of all ages to be 'breast-aware'. That means being aware of the normal look, shape and feel of your breasts and seeing your doctor if you notice any changes.

For women over 50, being breast-aware also involves having a mammogram every two years.

What causes breast cancer?

The exact causes are unknown, however we do know there are a number of risk factors that may increase your chances of developing breast cancer. These include:

- being a woman
- being over 50
- family history of breast cancer
- previous breast cancer
- excessive alcohol consumption
- being overweight or obese
- an inactive lifestyle.

Why is it important to be breast-aware?

If you are familiar with your breasts, you are more likely to notice any unusual changes that could be a sign of breast cancer.

It is normal for your breasts to change shape and feel different over the month due to hormonal changes. Therefore, you should feel and look at your breasts at different times of the month so you know what is normal for you.

Is there a technique I should use?

There is no right or wrong way to examine your breasts, but here are some tips that might make it easier:

- Use the flat part of your fingers and the finger pads to feel the surface of your breast and deeper into the breast tissue.

- Check all of your breast tissue, from your collarbone to your bra line and under your armpit.
- Look in the mirror for changes, and feel for changes when in the shower or lying in bed.

What do I look for?

There are a number of breast changes you need to look out for:

- Lump, lumpiness or thickening in your breast or armpit.
- A change in your nipple or nipple discharge.
- Changes in the texture of your skin.
- Ongoing breast pain.
- A noticeable change in the shape or size of one breast.

What if I find a breast change?

See your doctor as soon as possible. Your doctor may recommend you have a thorough physical examination as well as a range of tests to determine the cause of the breast change.

In most cases this change will not be related to breast cancer, but if it is, finding it early means there are more treatment options and a greater chance of survival.

How can I reduce my risk?

By adopting a healthy lifestyle, you can reduce your chance of developing breast cancer. Here are some tips:

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

