

National BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH



WHAT IS BREAST CANCER?

Breast cancer is a type of cancer that starts in the breast. Cancer starts when cells begin to grow out of control. Breast cancer cells usually form a tumor that can often be seen on an x-ray or felt as a lump. Breast cancer occurs almost entirely in women, but men can get breast cancer too. It's important to understand that most breast lumps are benign and not cancer (malignant). Non-cancerous breast tumors are abnormal growths, but they do not spread outside of the breast. They are not life threatening, but some types of benign breast lumps can increase a woman's risk of getting breast cancer. Any breast lump or change needs to be checked by a health care professional to determine if it is benign or malignant (cancer) and if it might affect your future cancer risk.

TYPES OF BREAST CANCER

There are many different types of breast cancer and common ones include ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) and invasive carcinoma. Others, like phyllodes tumors and angiosarcoma are less common. Once a biopsy is done, breast cancer cells are tested for proteins called estrogen receptors, progesterone receptors and HER2. The tumor cells are also closely looked at in the lab to find out what grade it is. The specific proteins found and the tumor grade can help decide treatment options.

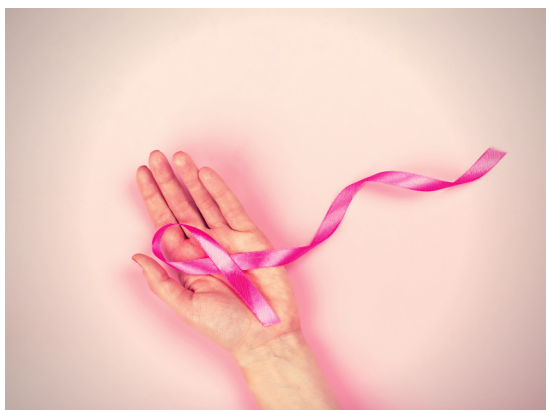


HOW BREAST CANCER SPREADS

Breast cancer can spread when the cancer cells get into the blood or lymph system and are carried to other parts of the body. The lymph system is a network of lymph (or lymphatic) vessels found throughout the body that connects lymph nodes (small bean-shaped collections of immune system cells). The clear fluid inside the lymph vessels, called lymph, contains tissue by-products and waste material, as well as immune system cells. The lymph vessels carry lymph fluid away from the breast. In the case of breast cancer, cancer cells can enter those lymph vessels and start to grow in lymph nodes. Most of the lymph vessels of the breast drain into Lymph nodes under the arm (axillary nodes) Lymph nodes around the collar bone (supraclavicular [above the collar bone] and infraclavicular [below the collar bone] lymph nodes) Lymph nodes inside the chest near the breast bone (internal mammary lymph nodes).

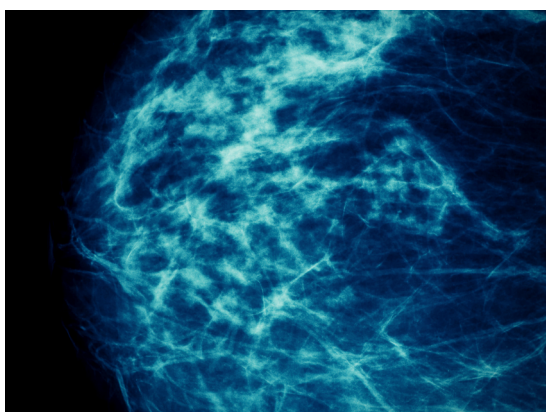
BREAST CANCER EARLY DETECTION AND DIAGNOSIS

Breast cancer is sometimes found after symptoms appear, but many women with breast cancer have no symptoms. This is why regular breast cancer screening is so important.



CAN BREAST CANCER BE FOUND EARLY?

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IMAGING TESTS TO FIND BREAST CANCER

Different tests can be used to look for and diagnose breast cancer. If your doctor finds an area of concern on a screening test (a mammogram), or if you have symptoms that could mean breast cancer, you will need more tests to know for sure if it's cancer.



BIOPSY

A biopsy is done when mammograms, other imaging tests, or a physical exam shows a breast change that may be cancer. A biopsy is the only way to know for sure if it's cancer.