

Breast cancer screenings are important to your health

Breast health is an important part of staying focused on your overall wellbeing. It is important to be aware of breast health. Be sure to talk to your doctor if you have questions.

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer in women in the United States¹. Screenings can help your healthcare provider find signs of cancer before you have any symptoms.

What to Do to Maintain Breast Health. Perform a Breast Self-Exam.

Some factors may determine your next steps to maintain breast health. Be aware of what is normal for you. It is important to talk to your doctor if you notice any changes in how your breasts look or feel.

Depending on your age, family history, or other risk factors, you might need a clinical breast exam or a mammogram. A clinical breast exam is performed by a doctor or nurse to feel for lumps or other changes.

If you are 50 to 74 years old you should receive a mammogram every year. A mammogram is a routine x-ray of your breasts. It's a simple test that only takes a few minutes. This is the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat. If you are younger than 50 years old and think you might have a higher risk, ask your doctor when to have a mammogram.

Watch for Potential Symptoms.

Being aware of these symptoms can help you take control of your health. Your primary care provider (PCP) can help if you notice any of these signs or have questions:

- Lump in the breast or underarm
- Thickening or swelling in the breast
- Changes to breast size or shape
- Dimpling of breast skin
- Pain in the breast
- Irritation, redness, or flaky skin on the breast or the nipple area
- Pulling in or pain of the nipple
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood

One way to be aware of any changes is by performing a monthly self-exam. This will help you find any changes to your breasts and get help from your doctor, if needed. Press down with the flats of your middle three fingers on your breasts while in the shower. Feel for any lumps, thickening, knots, or other changes. Visually inspect breasts in front of a mirror. Look for swelling, dimpling, or changes to nipples. Check both with your arms at your sides and raised over your head. Feel breasts while lying down on your back. Use your opposite hand to check each breast and underarm area for lumps.

Talk with your doctor if you notice any changes or have questions.



Make Choices to Improve Your Health.

Certain healthy choices may also reduce your risk of getting breast cancer. Try to:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Exercise regularly
- Eat a healthy diet
- Limit menopausal hormone use
- Reduce alcohol intake
- Breastfeed your children, if you can

Talk to your doctor about your risk of getting breast cancer. Ask for information about breast cancer screenings and mammograms and what you can do to improve your health.

¹ www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/statistics/index.htm