



Breast Cancer



Patient Booklet

What Is Breast Cancer?

Breast Cancer is the second most common cancer (after lung cancer) affecting women in the United States. Although much more common in women, men can also develop this disease.

An abnormal mass or group of cells in the breast is usually called a lump (or tumor). The presence of a lump, however, does not always mean cancer.

A benign (harmless) tumor is not cancerous. It is a form of lump that usually does not spread and may be easily removed.

A malignant tumor, however, is able to spread to other parts of the body and cause damage to surrounding tissues, and this is what is known as cancer.

What Causes Breast Cancer?

Risk factors associated with developing Breast Cancer may include:

- Female gender
- Increased age
- Family history of Breast Cancer - mother, sister, or daughter who has had the disease
- Personal history of cancer
- Other genetic factors
- Late menopause (older than 55 years)
- Birth of first child after age 30, or not having any children at all
- Previous radiation therapy
- Early menstruation (younger than 12 years)

Recognizing the Symptoms

Early detection and treatment is vital and your healthcare provider should carry out breast examinations on a regular basis. Women also need to perform monthly self-exams to check for changes.

The National Cancer Institute currently recommends that all women older than 40 years of age have a mammogram every 1-2 years. If you fall within a high-risk category, you may be encouraged to start them at a younger age.

Most women with Breast Cancer will first notice a change in the breast tissue. This will usually involve a painless lump that is solid, hard, irregular in shape, and not moveable. In some cases, there may also be pain, discharge (fluid seeping) from the nipple, or the nipple may pull into the breast. The shape or skin texture (similar to "orange peel") may change.

The lump may be in the breast or in the area surrounding the breast, including the underarm.

Diagnosing Breast Cancer

A careful review of your medical history, including that of your family, should be completed.

If a tumor is found, a number of tests will also be needed to determine if it is malignant.

These include:

- **Mammogram** -
An x-ray of the breast used to look for tumors not large enough to be felt in a self-examination.
- **Ultrasound (of the breast)** -
High frequency sound waves are used to determine if the lump is solid or liquid filled.
- **Biopsy (of the tumor)** -
A small piece of the tumor is removed for examination using a very thin needle.



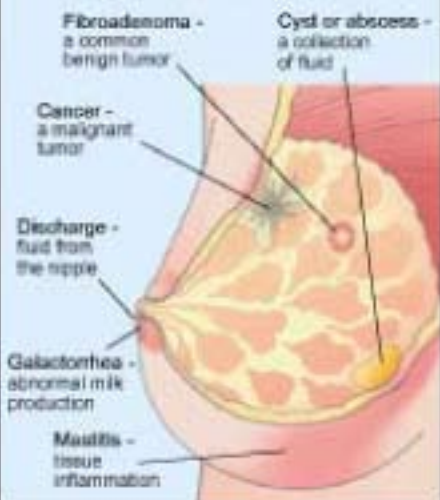
- Blood tests
- X-rays

THE FEMALE BREAST

The Normal Breast



Breast Disorders



Signs and Symptoms of Breast Disease



A lump in the breast which does not move when pressed with the fingers.



An unusual increase in the size of one breast, or a marked difference in appearance.



One breast noticeably lower than the other.



Swelling under the areola or around the neck or upper chest.



A change in the color or texture (peeling) of the skin.



A change in the color or appearance of the nipple or the surrounding area.



Swelling of the axilla (armpit) or redness of the skin.



Discharge from the nipple which is cloudy or bloody in color.

Self-Examination Procedures

- 1** After showering, check your breast thoroughly at least once every month.



- 2** Stand in front of a mirror and look for any visual changes including redness or swelling.



- 3** Lay down and push into the breast with gradually increasing pressure to check for any lumps.



- 4** Still laying down, go over the entire area of each breast with zig-zag patterns.



Tumor Classification/Staging

The American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC) has developed the TNM classification for staging Breast Cancer.

TNM stands for the following:

T= Primary Tumor

N= Regional Lymph Nodes

M= Distant Metastasis

Using the TNM system, Breast Cancer is given a stage:

0, I, II, III, or IV.

The goal of treatment for stages 0-III is to cure the disease; Stage IV is more advanced.

In Stage IV, the cancer has spread (M1) and treatment is given to control the disease.

Treatment will depend upon the type, or classification, of the tumor involved. This classification considers if the cancer has spread (is invasive or metastatic) and the type (ductal or lobular).

In normal breast tissue, cells contain receptors which are sensitive to hormones (such as estrogen or progesterone). These hormones help normal tissue growth.

Some tumors have these receptors (known as receptor-positive tumors), which can be blocked by some forms of medication.

Treatment and Medications

Treatment will usually involve a combination of surgery, radiation therapy, and medication.

With many of these treatments, your appetite may be reduced. However, good nutrition is still very important. Eating properly will help your body fight infection, combat the side effects of treatment, and keep you feeling stronger.

The treatment plan agreed upon should be one you feel comfortable with, so discuss these options with your healthcare provider first and ask questions.

Special exercises may be needed following certain types of surgery to restore motion and strength. They can also help to reduce pain and stiffness.

Depending on your previous treatment, monthly self-examinations and periodic mammograms may still be needed. Blood tests and x-rays may also be used to monitor your progress.

All drugs can be grouped together by how they work (ie, their specific mode of action). The list below includes all the different types of drugs approved for use in the treatment of this condition at the time of publication. (Updated information is also available online at: www.diseases-explained.com.)

Always consult your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the medication you have been prescribed.

Drug Type

Effects

(In alphabetical order)

Antiestrogens	A hormonal therapy that prevents estrogen receptor-positive tumors from getting the estrogen they need to grow. May also be used to reduce the risk of developing Breast Cancer in certain patients.
Antineoplastic Medications (Chemotherapy)	Given by injection (shot) or orally (by mouth) to destroy the cancer cells.
Aromatase Inhibitors	A single medication or a combination of different medications may be used to prevent formation of estrogen.
Luteinizing Hormone-Releasing Hormone Agonists (LHRH)	Sometimes used in more advanced forms of Breast Cancer to decrease the body's formation of estrogen.
Hormone Agonists (LHRH)	A hormonal therapy sometimes used in advanced forms of the disease.

Other Treatment

Surgery

Surgery to remove a tumor is still the most common form of treatment and may include:

Lumpectomy - Removal of the tumor and surrounding tissue only

Segmental Mastectomy - Partial removal of breast tissue

Total Mastectomy - Complete removal of breast tissue

Modified Radical Mastectomy - Complete removal of breast tissue and the axillary lymph nodes

Radical Mastectomy - Complete removal of the breast along with the underlying pectoral muscles and the axillary lymph nodes

Radiation Therapy

Carried out over a period of time to either reduce the size of the tumor before surgery or to destroy cancerous cells

Excusive SA agent in:

Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho
Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland
Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia

Diseases Explained™

