



Share the Wellness Tip

October 25, 2013

Calculating Breast Cancer Risks

Risk Factors for Breast Cancer

A risk factor is anything that affects your chance of getting a disease, such as cancer. But risk factors don't tell you everything. Having a risk factor, or even several, does not mean that you will get the disease. Some risk factors, like a person's age or race, can't be changed. A woman's risk for breast cancer increases with age and is highest after she reaches 60.

Here are a few breast cancer risk factors to consider:

- ♥ I am older than age 50.
- ♥ My mother, sister or daughter had breast cancer.
- ♥ I am aware I inherited a high genetic risk factor.
- ♥ I had my first menstrual period before age 12.
- ♥ I reached menopause after age 55.
- ♥ I never had children or I had them after age 30.
- ♥ I had hormone therapy with both estrogen and progestin for more than five years recently.
- ♥ I used birth control pills within the last 10 years.
- ♥ I have dense breast tissue.
- ♥ I have already had breast cancer.
- ♥ I've had radiation therapy of the chest.
- ♥ I'm overweight, past menopause and gained the weight as an adult.
- ♥ I have two or more drinks of alcohol a day.
- ♥ I took the drug DES while pregnant.
- ♥ I am not physically active.
- ♥ I've had certain benign breast conditions, such as atypical hyperplasia.

Women have a one in eight chance of developing breast cancer during their lives. Talk with your doctor about your breast cancer risk.

No matter what your risks may be, the earlier breast cancer is found, the more likely it is that treatment can be successful. Regular screening tests can help find breast cancer early, when it's most treatable. If you are a woman over the age of 20, talk to your doctor about clinical breast exams and if you are over the age of 40, discuss the benefits and risks of having a clinical breast exam and mammogram.

Sources: *The American Cancer Society; Susan G. Komen Foundation*

