

Male Breast Cancer

A man's breast contains glandular tissue, the cells of which can develop into a malignant tumor. Males are less likely to develop breast cancer than females because breast ducts are less developed and they have less of the female hormones that impact breast cell growth. Cancer cells in the breast can spread to the lymph nodes via the lymphatic vessels and become increasingly dangerous. Infiltrating ductal carcinoma is the most common form of breast cancer found in men, and men typically present with more advanced disease than women. This is why awareness among men is very important.

Statistics

- In 2020 there will be an estimated 2,620 new cases of invasive male breast cancer diagnosed, and an estimated 520 men will die of the disease in the United States.
- In Texas, an estimated 200 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2020, with an estimated 34 deaths.
- Male breast cancer accounts for less than 1 percent of all breast cancer diagnoses.
- One in 833 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer in his lifetime.
- Outlook for survival by stage from breast cancer in men and women is about the same. However, male breast cancer is frequently diagnosed at a later stage when it is more difficult to treat.
- Approximately one out of five men diagnosed with breast cancer will have a family member who has breast cancer.
- Men with a mutation of the BRCA2 gene have a lifetime breast cancer risk of 6 percent. The BRCA1 gene in men is responsible for a 1 percent lifetime risk of breast cancer.

Risk Factors

- **Age:** As men age, their risk of developing breast cancer increases, with most male breast cancers detected between 60 and 70 years old.
- **Radiation:** Men who have been treated with radiation around the chest area have an increased risk of breast cancer.
- **Family History:** Men with close blood relatives who have breast cancer or who have a mutation of the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene face an increased risk. Men with a strong family history of breast cancer should consider genetic testing to determine if they have the gene mutation, which could impact their risk both as a patient and carrier.
- **Estrogen:** Males with higher levels of estrogen due to diseases, such as the genetic disorder Klinefelter syndrome, have an increased risk. Also, men taking estrogen-related drugs for hormone therapy or sex changes may be at an increased risk.
- **Alcohol:** Men who are heavy drinkers face an increased risk because alcohol toxicity causes liver diseases, like cirrhosis, which can cause higher estrogen levels.
- **Obesity:** Just like with women, obesity can contribute to breast cancer in men. Obese men have higher levels of estrogen because fat cells convert male hormones known as androgens to estrogen.
- **Testicular Conditions:** Risk of developing male breast cancer can be increased by certain testicular conditions, such as an undescended testicle, testicle removal, and adult mumps.

Symptoms

As with women, early detection of breast cancer is crucial to treatment and survival. Men with a family history, such as immediate family members with breast cancer, or a BRCA mutation, should discuss strategies to manage risk with their physician. Signs to look for include:

- Redness or scaliness on the skin and around the nipple
- A nipple that turns inward
- Nipple discharge, including blood
- A lump or swelling in the chest or underarm area, typically without pain
- Puckering or dimpling skin
- Skin that looks like orange peel
- Change in the size or shape of the breast

Treatment Options

Because so few men are diagnosed with breast cancer, it is difficult to study the treatment of breast cancer in men separately from women. Treating breast cancer in men is similar to treating women with the disease. Treatment options can include surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, targeted therapy, proton therapy, bone-directed therapy, and palliative therapy. A combination of treatments may be used to provide the best chance of disease control.

Sources: American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute, and Texas Cancer Registry