

Male Breast Cancer

Male Breast Cancer

Information for men diagnosed with breast cancer and their families

Can Men Get Breast Cancer?

Because men have breast tissue, they can get breast cancer, but it is rare. About 1% of all breast cancer diagnoses in Canada happen in men. The most common type of breast cancer in men is invasive ductal carcinoma (also called IDC). It is a cancer that began growing in a milk duct and has invaded the fibrous or fatty tissue of the breast outside of the duct.

Some men are not aware they can get breast cancer. They may not notice a change or not think it is important. They may be embarrassed about a change in their breast or chest and delay seeing a doctor. This can delay diagnosis.

What Signs Should I Watch For?

Any change in the breast, chest or nipple can be a warning sign of breast cancer, like:

- Lump, hard knot or thickening in the breast, chest or underarm (most often painless, but may be tender)
- Dimpling, puckering or redness of the skin of the breast
- Change in the size or shape of the breast
- Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
- Pulling in of the nipple (inverted nipple) or other parts of the breast
- Nipple discharge (rare)

If you notice any of the warning signs above or other changes in your breast, chest or nipple, see your doctor right away.

**What are your questions? Please ask.
We are here to help you.**

Things that Increase the Risk of Male Breast Cancer:

- Older age
- BRCA2 gene mutation
- Family history of breast cancer
- Gynecomastia (enlargement of the breast tissue)
- Klinefelter's syndrome (a genetic condition related to high levels of estrogen in the body)
- Overweight and obesity

BRCA1 and BRCA2 Genes

Everyone has the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes. These genes help fix damage to the DNA in cells. But, some people inherit a mutation in one of their BRCA genes, which increases their risk for certain cancers, such as breast (female and male), ovarian, pancreatic and prostate cancers and skin cancer (also called melanoma).

Those who have a gene mutation have options to lower and manage their cancer risks.

Men can carry BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations and can be at increased risk for certain cancers. While breast cancer risks in male BRCA mutation carriers are not as high as those in women, risk management and early detection are important.

For men and women, a family history of breast, ovarian, prostate or pancreatic cancers on their father's side of the family as well as their mother's side may be a clue about a hereditary gene mutation. Many people mistakenly believe a family history of breast or ovarian cancer only matters on the mother's side of the family. Men can inherit a BRCA gene mutation from their mother or father and can pass on their BRCA gene mutation to their male and female children.

For men with BRCA1/2 mutations, breast tissue can change between the ages 35-40. Starting at age 35, male BRCA mutation carriers should have clinical breast exams annually by a doctor. Prostate cancer screening is recommended to start at age 40 for carriers of BRCA2 and be considered for BRCA1 carriers.

Men with a BRCA mutation and family history of pancreatic cancer or melanoma should speak to a physician to create a screening plan.

Men in a family with a known BRCA mutation may also wish to have genetic testing to make reproductive decisions. The decision to use reproductive technologies to avoid passing on genetic traits is a deeply personal choice. For those who want to consider these technologies, preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) can be used with in vitro fertilization. PGD involves screening embryos (fertilized eggs) for a specific genetic mutation, such as BRCA1/2 mutations, before being transferred into a woman's womb. This can be an option for those who carry a hereditary condition and wish to reduce the chance of passing it on to a child.

How will my Doctor Diagnose Breast Cancer?

Tests such as mammogram and/or ultrasound are used to assess the size and extent of the disease and you will need a biopsy to confirm a diagnosis. A biopsy is a surgical procedure where breast cells are removed and tested in a lab.

I've Just Been Diagnosed

It is always a shock to be diagnosed with a cancer. It is important to ask questions, gather as much information as you can to help you make decisions about your treatment and feel supported in your decision making.

How is Breast Cancer Treated?

- Treatment of breast cancer in men involves some combination of surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, hormone or targeted therapy.
- Surgery is the main treatment of breast cancer.
 - › Mastectomy is the procedure of choice due to the small size of the male breast.
 - › Mastectomy is removal of the entire breast and the nipple.
- Radiation may be used after surgery depending on the size of the breast cancer or spread to the axillary lymph nodes.
- The tissue removed is analyzed by the pathologist, if the tumor has estrogen or progesterone receptors, then hormone therapy is often used, depending on the stage of the cancer.
- Chemotherapy may be given for men with hormone receptor-negative breast cancer.
- Other markers are assessed also by the pathologist.

- Men with HER2 positive breast cancers may be treated with a monoclonal antibody like trastuzumab (also called Herceptin), plus chemotherapy.

What Questions Should I Ask?

- What type of breast cancer do I have?
- What is the stage of my cancer?
- How do you know the cancer has not spread to other parts of my body?
- What treatments are recommended? Why?
- How can I prepare for treatment?
- What side effects should I expect?
- Which side effects should I tell you about?
- What is my prognosis (also called chance for recovery)?
- What follow-up care will I need after my cancer treatments are finished?

Where Can I Learn More?

www.malebreastcancer.ca

www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/breast/breast-cancer/breast-cancer-in-men

www.hisbreastcancer.org/

You can call the Canadian Cancer Society's Information Service at 1-888-939-3333 to find support services in your area or ask questions about your cancer and your treatment. You can also find this information on their website www.cancer.ca/ns.

Looking for more health information?

Find this brochure and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>
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For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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NSCCP-1686 Updated March 2019 ©Nova Scotia Health Authority