

Breast cancer risk factors (in alphabetical order):

- Age
- Age at first childbirth and number of childbirths
- Age at first period
- Age at menopause
- Alcohol use
- Ashkenazi Jewish heritage
- Being female
- Being overweight (after menopause)
- Birth control pill use
- Breast density on mammogram
- Family history of breast, ovarian or prostate cancer
- Hyperplasia and other benign breast conditions
- Inherited gene mutations
- Lack of exercise
- Menopausal hormone therapy (postmenopausal hormone use)
- Not breastfeeding
- Personal history of breast cancer or other cancers
- Radiation exposure in youth
- Weight gain

Learn more about breast cancer risk factors at komen.org.



What affects your risk of breast cancer?

The exact causes of breast cancer are not fully known. No one knows why one person gets breast cancer and another doesn't. There are things that increase (or decrease) the chance of getting breast cancer though. These are called risk factors.

Breast cancer is complex. It's likely caused by a combination of risk factors. Some factors you may be able to control (like leading a healthy lifestyle). Some are out of your control. For example, the two most common risk factors for breast cancer are being a woman and getting older. These are things you cannot change. And, some risk factors are still unknown.

Since you can only control some risk factors, you cannot avoid some amount of risk. Most risk factors you have some control over have only a small effect on risk. This means no one behavior will prevent breast cancer. But, it also means there's no one factor that will cause it.

Talk with your doctor about your risk.

Make healthy lifestyle choices:

Most people with breast cancer were at average risk. We don't know which factors came together to cause the cancer.

However, some **healthy lifestyle** choices may reduce the risk of breast cancer.

- Maintain a **healthy weight**.
- Add **exercise** into your routine.
- Limit **alcohol** intake.
- Limit **menopausal hormone** use.
- **Breastfeed**, if you can.

For more information, visit komen.org or call Susan G. Komen's breast care helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 10 PM ET.

Related educational resources:

- Breast Cancer Screening and Follow-Up Tests
- Breast Density
- Genetics and Breast Cancer
- How Hormones Affect Breast Cancer
- Healthy Living and Breast Cancer
- Risk-Lowering Options for Women at Higher Risk of Breast Cancer

Other resources:

Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool (the Gail Model)

Is often used by doctors to estimate risk. Although the tool can estimate your risk, it can't tell whether or not you'll get breast cancer.

Family Health History Tool

This tool helps you gather and record your family health history. It organizes health information which can be downloaded and shared with other family members or doctors.



Get the facts about breast cancer

Because the causes of breast cancer are not fully known, there are many myths about the disease. Learn the truth here.

FACTS:

1. The most common risk factors for breast cancer are being female and **getting older**.
2. Risk factors can vary by **race and ethnicity**.
3. Most women who get breast cancer don't have a **family history** of breast cancer.
4. Drinking **alcohol** increases the risk of breast cancer.
5. Wearing a **bra** doesn't cause breast cancer.

These are just some of the myths out there. Visit [komen.org](https://www.komen.org) for safe, accurate and current breast cancer information. Share what you've learned and help stop the spread of myths that cause worry and concern.

Or, if you have questions and want to talk to someone in person, call our **Breast Care Helpline** at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636). A trained and caring staff member is here to assist you Monday-Friday from 9:00am -10:00pm ET. You can always count on us as a source of trusted information!

For more information about risk factors go to [komen.org/risk](https://www.komen.org/risk)

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