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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# About Breast Cancer in Males

This information explains breast cancer in males, including risk factors, prevention, symptoms, and diagnosis.

## About Breast Cancer in Males

While breast cancer is more common in females, it can also affect males. About 1 in 1,000 males in the United States will get breast cancer during their lifetime.

Breast cancer in males is more likely to be cured if it's found early. But many males don't realize that they can get breast cancer so they don't always notice the signs or only see their doctor when the lumps have gotten large. If you notice a lump or any other changes to your breast, call your doctor right away.

## Risk Factors of Breast Cancer

The most common risk factors linked to breast cancer in males include:

- Getting older
- Family history of breast cancer
- Inherited gene mutations, most commonly a *BRCA2* mutation
- Having higher levels of the female hormone estrogen, lower levels of male androgen hormones (such as testosterone), or both
  - Obesity can cause an increase in the production of estrogen.
  - Having severe liver disease can cause low levels of androgens and higher levels of estrogen.
  - Having prostate cancer treated with estrogen-related hormonal therapies can increase your estrogen levels.

- Klinefelter syndrome, which is a rare condition you're born with, can lower your testosterone levels.

## Preventing Breast Cancer

There are a few lifestyle changes you can make to lower your risk of getting breast cancer, including:

- Reaching and maintaining a healthy body weight
- Exercising regularly
- Limiting alcohol use to no more than 2 drinks per day
  - One serving is equal to a 5-ounce glass of wine, 12 ounces of beer, or 1.5 ounces of liquor

## Symptoms of Breast Cancer

The most common symptom of breast cancer in males is a lump or swelling that can be felt in the breast. These lumps are usually painless.

Other signs include:

- Nipple retraction (when the nipple is flat)
- Nipple inversion (when the nipple is turned inward)
- Discharge (fluid coming from the nipple)
- Redness or scaling of the nipple or breast skin
- Dimpled breast skin

Most of the time, these symptoms are caused by noncancerous conditions, such as an infection or gynecomastia (a harmless swelling of breast tissue). Call your doctor as soon as you notice any changes in your breast.

# Diagnosing Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is diagnosed in the same way for everyone. Your doctor will first do a breast exam and let you know if you need any additional testing.

## Additional Resources

### **American Cancer Society (ACS)**

[www.cancer.org/cancer/breastcancerinmales/detailedguide/index](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/breastcancerinmales/detailedguide/index)

800-227-2345

Provides detailed information about male breast cancer.

### **His Breast Cancer Awareness**

[www.hisbreastcancer.org](http://www.hisbreastcancer.org)

Offers education and information about breast cancer in males.

### **Male Breast Cancer Coalition**

[malebreastcancercoalition.org](http://malebreastcancercoalition.org)

Patient advocacy organization that educates about breast cancer in males.

### **Susan G. Komales**

[ww5.komales.org/BreastCancer/BreastCancerinmales.html](http://ww5.komales.org/BreastCancer/BreastCancerinmales.html)

Provides information and support services for breast cancer in males.

### **CancerCare**

[www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

800-813-HOPE (800-813-4673)

National nonprofit organization that helps people with cancer and their caregivers through counseling, education, information, referrals, and direct financial assistance.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly.  
If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM,  
during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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