PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# About Male Breast Cancer

This information explains male breast cancer, including risk factors, prevention, symptoms, and diagnosis. It's meant for people whose sex assigned at birth was male.

## About Male Breast Cancer

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.

Male breast cancer is more likely to be cured if it's found early. But many males don't realize they can get breast cancer. 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 male breast cancer include:

- Getting older.
- Having a family history of breast cancer.
- Having 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. They include:

- Reaching and maintaining a healthy body weight.
- Exercising regularly.
- Having no more than 2 alcoholic drinks a day. One drink is equal to 5 ounces of wine, 12 ounces of beer, or 1.5 ounces of liquor.

## Symptoms of Breast Cancer

The most common symptom of male breast cancer is a lump or swelling you can feel in your breast. These lumps are usually painless.

Other signs include:

- Nipple retraction (when your nipple is flat).
- Nipple inversion (when your nipple is turned inward).
- Discharge (fluid coming from your nipple).

- Redness or scaling of your nipple or breast skin.
- Dimpled breast skin.

Most of the time, these symptoms are caused by a noncancerous condition. Examples include 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 morel testing.

## Additional Resources

**American Cancer Society (ACS)**
www.cancer.org/cancer/breastcancerinmales/detailedguide/index
800-227-2345
Provides detailed information about male breast cancer.

**His Breast Cancer Awareness**
www.hisbreastcancer.org
Offers education and information about male breast cancer.

**Male Breast Cancer Coalition**
malebreastcancercoalition.org
Patient advocacy organization that educates about male breast cancer.

**Susan G. Komen**
ww5.komen.org/BreastCancer/BreastCancerinmales.html

Provides information and support services for male breast cancer.

CancerCare
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 questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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