



8IGHTWAYS[®]
TOPREVENT BREAST CANCER



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Breast cancer. Just reading those words can make many women worry. And that's natural. Nearly everyone knows someone touched by the disease.

But there is a lot of good news about breast cancer these days. Treatments keep getting better, and we know more than ever about ways to prevent the disease. These eight steps can help lower the risk of breast cancer. Not every one applies to every woman, but most women will have some steps they can take to improve their breast health. And making even a single change can have benefit.

1 Keep Weight in Check

It's easy to tune out because it gets said so often, but maintaining a healthy weight is an important goal for everyone. Being overweight can increase the risk of many different cancers, including breast cancer, especially after menopause.

2 Be Physically Active

Regular exercise is one of the best things for your health. It can boost mood and energy. It can help keep weight in check. And it can lower the risk of many serious diseases, including breast cancer. Try to get at least 30 minutes a day, but any amount of physical activity is better than none.

3 Eat Your Fruits & Vegetables – and Avoid Alcohol

A healthy diet can help lower the risk of breast cancer. Try to eat a lot of fruits and vegetables and limit alcohol. Even low levels of drinking can increase the risk of breast cancer. And with the other risks of alcohol, not drinking is the overall healthiest choice.

4 Don't Smoke

On top of its many other health risks, smoking causes at least 15 different cancers – including breast cancer. If you smoke, try to quit as soon as possible. It's almost never too late to get benefits. You can do it. And getting help can double your chances of quitting for good: visit smokefree.gov or call 800-QUIT-NOW (in IL 866-QUIT-YES).

5 Breastfeed, If Possible

Breastfeeding for a total of one year or more (combined for all children) lowers the risk of breast cancer. It also has great health benefits for the child. For breastfeeding information or support, contact your pediatrician, hospital or local health department.



6 Dont Forget Mammograms

- Breast cancer screening with mammograms saves lives. It doesn't help prevent cancer, but it can help find cancer early when it's more treatable.
- Most women should get yearly mammograms starting at age 40.
- Women at higher risk for breast cancer may need to start mammograms earlier. So, it's best to talk to a doctor by age 30 about any breast cancer risk factors you may have and if you'd benefit from earlier screening.
- Regularly doing breast self-exams is not recommended for screening. They haven't been found to have benefit. But you should be familiar with your breasts and tell a healthcare provider right away if you notice any changes in how your breasts look or feel.

7 Avoid Birth Control Pills, Particularly After Age 35 or If You Smoke

Birth control pills have both risks and benefits. The younger a woman is, the lower the risks are. While women are taking birth control pills, they have a slightly increased risk of breast cancer. This risk goes away quickly after stopping the pill. The risk of stroke and heart attack is also increased while on the pill – particularly if a woman smokes. However, long-term use can also have important benefits, like lowering the risk of ovarian cancer, colon cancer and uterine cancer – not to mention unwanted pregnancy. So there's also a lot in its favor. If you're very concerned about breast cancer, avoiding birth control pills is one option to lower risk.

8 Avoid Menopausal Hormone Therapy

Menopausal hormone therapy shouldn't be taken long term to prevent chronic diseases. Studies show it has a mixed effect on health, increasing the risk of some diseases and lowering the risk of others. And both estrogen-only hormones and estrogen-plus-progestin hormones increase the risk of breast cancer.

If women do take menopausal hormone therapy, it should be for the shortest time possible. The best person to talk to about the risks and benefits of menopausal hormone therapy is your doctor.

8 Tamoxifen and Raloxifene for Women at High Risk

Although not commonly thought of as a “healthy behavior,” taking the prescription drugs tamoxifen and raloxifene can significantly lower the risk of breast cancer in woman at high risk of the disease. Approved by the FDA for breast cancer prevention, these powerful drugs can have side effects, so they aren't right for everyone. If you think you're at high risk, talk to your doctor to see if tamoxifen or raloxifene may be right for you.

for high-risk women



Find Out Your Family History

Women with a strong family history of cancer can take special steps to lower or manage their risk. You may be at high risk of breast cancer if you have a mother or sister who developed breast or ovarian cancer (especially at an early age) or if you have multiple family members (including males) who developed breast, ovarian or prostate cancer. A doctor or genetic counselor can help you understand your family history of the disease.

Other Important Risk Factors for Breast Cancer

Unfortunately, there are a number of important breast cancer risk factors that women have no control over. Knowing which ones apply to you can help you understand your risk and the steps you can take to lower or manage it. Talk to a doctor or other healthcare professional about these risk factors and your overall risk of breast cancer.

- Older age, especially 60 years or over
- Family history of breast cancer
- Radiation therapy to chest area
- First menstrual period (menarche) before age 12
- Menopause at age 55 or over
- First childbirth after age 35
- Never given birth
- Dense breasts
- History of certain types of benign breast disease (like atypical hyperplasia)



Know Your Risk. Change Your Future

Visit yourdiseaserisk.washu.edu and, with just a few clicks or taps, get a personal estimate of your breast cancer risk and custom prevention tips.

