

Road to **WELL**fluent™

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CAN I LOWER MY RISK OF BREAST CANCER?

There is no sure way to prevent breast cancer. But there are things you can do that might lower your risk. Many risk factors are beyond your control, such as being born female and getting older. But other risk factors can be changed and may lower your risk. For women who are known to be at increased risk for breast cancer, there are additional steps that might reduce the risk of developing breast cancer. Read the tips below for those risk factors that can be controlled, for those that cannot such as being born female and aging, the best approach to reducing your risk is early detection. According to the US Preventive Services Task Force women aged 50 to 74 who are at average risk of breast cancer should get a mammogram every 2 years. Women aged 40 to 49 should talk to their doctor or other health care professional about when to start and how often to get a mammogram.

For all women

Get to and stay at a healthy weight: Both increased body weight and weight gain as an adult are linked with a higher risk of breast cancer after menopause. The American Cancer Society recommends you stay at a healthy weight throughout your life and avoid excess weight gain by balancing your food intake with physical activity.

Be physically active: Many studies have shown that moderate to vigorous physical activity is linked with lower breast cancer risk, so it's important to get regular physical activity. The American Cancer Society recommends that adults get at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous intensity activity each week (or a combination of these), preferably spread throughout the week. Getting to or exceeding the upper limit of 300 minutes is ideal.

Moderate activity is anything that makes you breathe as hard as you do during a brisk walk. It causes a slight increase in heart rate and breathing. You should be able to talk, but not sing during the activity.

Vigorous activities are performed at a higher intensity. They cause



an increased heart rate, sweating, and a faster breathing rate.

Avoid or limit alcohol: Alcohol increases risk of breast cancer. Even drinking small amounts of alcohol has been linked with an increase in risk. It is best not to drink alcohol at all. For women who do drink, they should have no more than 1 alcoholic drink a day. A drink is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits (hard liquor).

Is there a link between diet/vitamins and breast cancer risk?

The possible link between diet and breast cancer risk is not clear, but this is an active area of study. Some (but not all) studies have suggested that a diet that is high in vegetables, fruit, and calcium-rich dairy products, but low in red and processed meats might help lower the risk of breast cancer. It's also not clear if specific vegetables, fruits, or other foods can lower risk. And most studies have not found that lowering fat intake has much of an effect on breast cancer risk (although some have suggested it might help lower the risk of dying from breast cancer).

But just because the science isn't clear on this doesn't mean that there's no point in eating a healthy diet. A diet low in fat, processed and red meat, and sugary drinks, but high in fruits and vegetables can have many health benefits, including lowering the risk of some other types of cancer.

So far, there's no strong evidence that taking vitamins or any other type of dietary supplement reduces the risk of breast cancer.

For more on the links between body weight, physical activity, diet, alcohol, and the risk of breast cancer (as well as other cancers), see the American Cancer Society Guidelines for Diet and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention.

Other factors that might lower risk: Women who choose to breastfeed for at least several months after childbirth may also get an added benefit of reducing their breast cancer risk.

Using hormone therapy after menopause can increase your risk of breast cancer. To avoid this, talk to your health care provider about non-hormonal options to treat menopausal symptoms.



For women at increased risk of breast cancer

If you are at increased risk for breast cancer (for instance, because you have a strong family history of breast cancer, a known inherited gene mutation that increases breast cancer risk, such as in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, or you have had DCIS or LCIS), there are some things you can consider that might help lower your chances of developing breast cancer (or help find it early):

- Genetic counseling and testing for breast cancer risk (if it hasn't been done already)
- Medicines to lower breast cancer risk
- Close observation to look for early signs of breast cancer.
- Your health care provider can help you determine your risk of breast cancer, as well as which, if any, of these options might be right for you.

Genetic counseling and testing

If there are reasons to think you might have inherited a gene change that increases your risk of breast cancer (such as having a strong family history of breast cancer, or a family member with a known gene mutation), you might want to talk to your doctor about genetic counseling to see if you should be tested. To learn more, see Genetic Counseling and Testing for Breast Cancer Risk.

If you decide to be tested and a gene change is found, this might affect your decision about using the options below to help lower your risk for breast cancer (or find it early)

Medicines to lower breast cancer risk

Prescription medicines can be used to help lower breast cancer risk in certain women at increased risk of breast cancer.

Medicines such as tamoxifen and raloxifene block the action of estrogen in breast tissue. Tamoxifen might be an option even if you haven't gone through menopause, while raloxifene is only used for women who have gone through menopause. Other drugs, called aromatase inhibitors, might also be an option for women past menopause. All of these medicines can also have side effects, so it's important to understand the possible benefits and risks of taking one of them.

Close observation

For women at increased breast cancer risk who don't want to take medicines or have surgery, some doctors might recommend close observation. This approach might include:

More frequent doctor visits (such as every 6 to 12 months) for breast exams and ongoing risk assessment.

Starting breast cancer screening with yearly mammograms at a younger age. Possibly adding another screening test, such as breast MRI. While this approach doesn't lower breast cancer risk, it might help find it early, when it's likely to be easier to treat.

Source: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/breast-cancer/risk-and-prevention/can-i-lower-my-risk.html>

Enjoy a Safe and Healthy Fall Season

Get Your Flu Shot

Autumn is the start of flu season, and doctors recommended everyone 6 months and older gets vaccinated against the flu.

Have No Fear! Halloween is Here

Halloween is a fun-filled time for children, but there are many dangers associated with the holiday unrelated to ghouls, goblins and witches. Parents need to take the necessary Halloween safety precautions to make sure their children remain safe while still having fun.

Drive Safely as it gets Darker

Daylight Saving Time ends every year on the first Sunday in November. This means it starts to get darker earlier. As we set our clocks backward by one hour in most areas of the country, here are some tips for driving at night.

Green Cross Tip: When you change your clocks, it's also a great time to check the batteries in your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.



Source: <https://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/autumn-safety/autumn-safety-home>

Global Handwashing Day

Global Handwashing Day is celebrated every year on October 15th.



What are the benefits of hand hygiene?

Handwashing with soap can reduce diarrheal diseases by 30%.

Handwashing with soap can reduce acute respiratory infections by up to 20%. Handwashing plays an important role in reducing the transmission of outbreak-related pathogens such as cholera, Ebola, shigellosis, SARS, hepatitis E, and COVID-19. Hand hygiene is protective against healthcare-associated infections and reduces the spread of antimicrobial resistance.

Hand hygiene may contribute to the reduction of Neglected Tropical Diseases.

Hand hygiene can help reduce the transmission of a range of diseases.

Handwashing has also been linked to benefits beyond disease reduction, such as reduced rates of school absenteeism and recently, programs aimed at encouraging older children to perform regular handwashing in school have been central to safe school-reopening strategies and preventing school closures.

Source: <https://globalhandwashing.org/global-handwashing-day/>

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