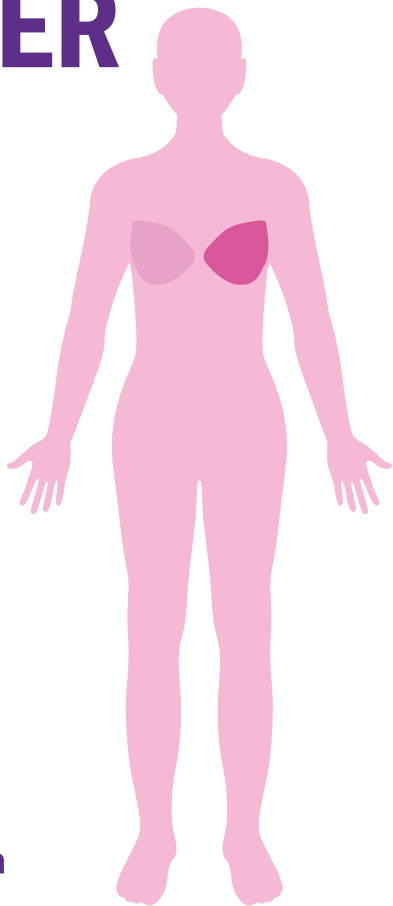




REDUCING YOUR RISK OF BREAST CANCER



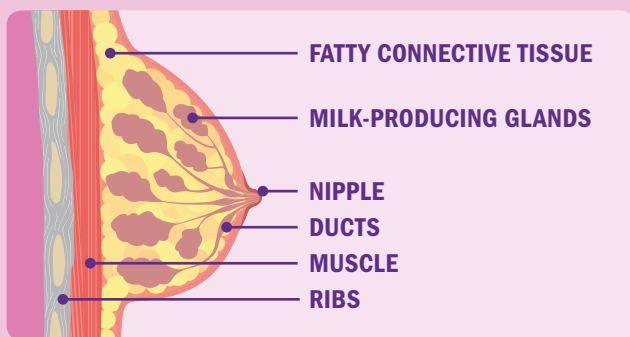
World
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Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK. One in eight women develop the disease at some stage in their lifetime – that's over 50,000 new cases diagnosed in UK women every year. But the evidence suggests about 20,000 of these cases could be prevented if we all ate a healthy diet, kept our weight healthy and were regularly physically active.

What is breast cancer?

Breasts are made up of fatty connective tissue, milk-producing glands, and ducts that carry milk to the nipples. Breast tissue develops in response to hormones, particularly during puberty, pregnancy and when breastfeeding.

Breast cancer starts when cells are damaged and then grow uncontrollably, forming a lump called a tumour. Almost all breast cancers develop in the milk-producing glands or ducts.



Are you at risk?

As with all cancers, the risk of developing breast cancer varies from person to person and isn't caused by one thing. There are lots of different factors that affect our chances of developing the disease. Keep reading to find out more.

Risk factors

Risk factors are characteristics that increase the chances of women developing breast cancer. Some risk factors are beyond our control, such as:

- ▶ **Genetics** – only three per cent of cases are in women who carry genes that have been linked to the disease. Even if you have inherited one of these genes, making healthy diet and lifestyle choices can still help to reduce your risk of developing breast cancer.
- ▶ **Family history** (particularly if a close relative is diagnosed under 50) – this may mean your family carries genes that may be linked to breast cancer.
- ▶ **Age** – risk increases as we get older.
- ▶ **Height** – taller women are at greater risk.
- ▶ **Starting your period early** (before 12 years) or **going through the menopause late** (over 55 years).
- ▶ **Not having children, or having a late first pregnancy** (over 30 years).

Naturally occurring oestrogen and progesterone can influence the development and growth of some breast cancers. Some medications containing artificial versions of these hormones have also been linked to an increased risk. These include:

- ▶ **Combined HRT** (the evidence is less clear for oestrogen-only HRT) – risk increases slightly the longer you take HRT, but decreases gradually once you stop.
- ▶ **Contraceptive pill** (the evidence is less clear for the progesterone-only ‘mini’ pill) – risk slightly increases when taking the pill, but slowly returns to normal after you stop.

However, there is strong evidence linking lifestyle factors to an increased risk of breast cancer in women that we can make choices about, such as:

- ▶ **Drinking alcohol.**
- ▶ **Being overweight or obese (for postmenopausal breast cancer only).**
- ▶ **Not doing enough physical activity.**
- ▶ **Not breastfeeding when you have a baby.**

Reducing your risk

If any of these risk factors apply to you, it doesn't mean that you will develop breast cancer – it just means that your risk may be higher than average. By following these steps and making small changes to your lifestyle you can help to reduce your risk.



Think about what you drink

Drinking any amount of alcohol will increase your risk of six types of cancer so, for cancer prevention, **it is best not to drink alcohol**. If you choose to, limit alcoholic drinks and follow national guidelines.

In the UK, the recommendation is to drink no more than 14 units a week, spread over at least three days – this is roughly equal to seven drinks a week.

One drink is:



One small glass (125ml) of wine



One single measure of spirits



Half a pint of regular strength lager or cider





Be a healthy weight

Eating a healthy diet and being physically active can help you to keep your weight healthy. Research shows that being overweight or obese increases the risk of postmenopausal breast cancer and 10 other cancers.

Check if you could benefit from losing some weight by using our BMI calculator:

www.wcrf-uk.org/bmi-calculator



Move more



Being physically active can reduce the risk of bowel and womb cancer, as well as breast cancer. It also burns calories, which can help you avoid gaining weight.

Aim to do at least 30 minutes of moderate or vigorous activity every day – that's any activity that raises your heart rate and makes you breathe a bit deeper – and **spend less time sitting down**.

TOP TIP: Being physically active doesn't mean you have to go to the gym – brisk walking, gardening, vacuuming, swimming and dancing count too.



If you can, breastfeed your baby

Breastfeeding is good for your baby's health and it can help protect you against breast cancer, as well as helping you to lose any baby weight.

If you are able to, then it is best to breastfeed your baby exclusively for six months. After that, your baby will benefit if you continue to breastfeed alongside introducing other foods.

What to look out for

If you know how your breasts normally look and feel, then you'll be quick to spot anything unusual. Most changes won't turn out to be breast cancer, but if you do notice anything different, it's best to get it checked by your doctor.

How to check your breasts

There's no right or wrong way to check your breasts, just do what feels comfortable for you. Most women check their breasts in the shower, or when they're getting dressed. You may find it easier to check your breasts when you are lying down. Remember to include up to your collarbone and your armpits.

Changes you should look for

- ▶ A change in the shape or size of either breast.
- ▶ A change in the skin texture, such as puckering or dimpling, or a rash on or around either nipple.
- ▶ Discharge from one or both nipples.
- ▶ Either nipple becoming inverted (pulled in), or changing shape or position.
- ▶ Pain in either breast or armpit, especially if new and constant.
- ▶ A new lump, thickening or bumpy area in either breast or armpit.

Remember that breasts can be quite lumpy normally, especially just before a menstrual period.

Get any changes checked

If you see or feel something you don't think is normal, make an appointment with your doctor as soon as you can.

What about screening?

There is a better chance of breast cancer being successfully treated if it is found early – that's why the UK has a breast cancer screening programme.

All women aged between 50 and 70 should be invited to attend a screening every three years. If you are over 70, you are still eligible to attend a free breast screening, but you will have to contact your local screening unit to make an appointment. To find details, visit: www.nhs.uk/breastscreening or ask your doctor.

If you are at higher risk of breast cancer (for example, if you have strong family history of the disease) your doctor may refer you to a hospital high-risk clinic. Speak to your doctor if you are concerned about this.



Breast cancer is rare in men (around 400 new cases in the UK every year), so there isn't much evidence about how men can reduce their risk. However, following the advice in this leaflet can help to reduce the risk of other cancer types.



Advice for cancer survivors

If you are a breast cancer survivor and have completed your treatment, there is growing evidence that eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active may help to prevent you from getting cancer again and improve survival.

However, if you have recently been diagnosed or are undergoing cancer treatment it's best to ask an appropriately trained health professional (such as a dietitian) for advice.

For more information:

www.wcrf-uk.org/survivors



Find out more



For more information on **reducing your risk of cancer**, as well as **practical advice** on choosing a balanced diet, being physically active and maintaining a healthy weight, visit our website: www.wcrf-uk.org or call us on **0207 343 4205**.

For information about **symptoms, screening** and for **answers to frequently asked questions**, please visit: www.nhs.uk/breastcancer or speak to your doctor.

If you want more information on the **detection and treatment of breast cancer (or other cancers)**, we recommend contacting **Macmillan Cancer Support**. Visit their website: www.macmillan.org.uk or call **0808 808 0000**.

Cancer Prevention Recommendations



1 Be a healthy weight



2 Move more



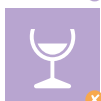
3 Avoid high-calorie foods and sugary drinks



4 Enjoy more grains, veg, fruit and beans



5 Limit red meat and avoid processed meat



6 For cancer prevention, don't drink alcohol



7 Eat less salt



8 For cancer prevention, don't rely on supplements



9 If you can, breastfeed your baby



10 Cancer survivors should follow our Recommendations

Special Populations:

And, always remember – do not smoke or chew tobacco

To read our full Recommendations visit:

www.wcrf-uk.org/10ways



About World Cancer Research Fund

We are the leading UK charity dedicated to the prevention of cancer. Our mission is to champion the latest and most authoritative scientific research from around the world on cancer prevention and survival through diet, weight and physical activity so that we can help people make informed lifestyle choices to reduce their cancer risk.

Cancer currently affects one in two people in the UK but about a third of the most common cancers could be prevented by following our Cancer Prevention Recommendations. That's around 80,000 cancer-free lives.

The cornerstone of our research programme is our Continuous Update Project (CUP). It's the world's largest source of scientific research on cancer prevention and survival through diet, weight and physical activity. The CUP reviews new research findings to ensure our advice is always up-to-date. Find out more: www.wcrf-uk.org/our-research

For the references used in this leaflet, or for tips and advice to reduce your cancer risk, please contact us on the details below.

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Registered Office: 22 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HH.

All information correct at time of print.
WEAABC Next review date October 2019

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