

# BREAST CANCER AWARENESS FOR SENIORS

AWARENESS MONTH



Breast Cancer  
Awareness Month

## What Senior Women Need to Know About Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers women face. The two biggest risk factors for this type of cancer are being female and getting older. Senior women need to be aware of this disease. Since October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, start the conversation.

(Currents by Great Call)



### Seniors and Breast Cancer Basics

#### What Is Breast Cancer?

Cancer is a general term for many diseases where abnormal cells form and negatively impact healthy cells. Groups of these cells are called tumors. Breast cancer affects tissues in the breasts and can come in different forms, like metastatic, inflammatory, or ductal carcinoma in breast tissues.

#### Risk Factors for Breast Cancer

Besides being a woman and being a senior, there are several factors that increase the risk of breast cancer. Risk factors include:

- Never having children or having a first child at an older age (35+)
- Having dense breast tissue
- A family history of breast or ovarian cancer
- Previous cancer in one breast or breast tissue abnormalities like hyperplasia

#### Diagnosing Breast Cancer

If symptoms of breast cancer appear, a senior may be diagnosed through one or more of the following:

- A mammogram
- An MRI
- An ultrasound
- A biopsy
- Lab tests

([National Breast Cancer Foundation](#))

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## Treating Breast Cancer in Seniors

Women over the age of 65 make up 40 percent of patients newly diagnosed with breast cancer. Treating senior patients can be different than treating cancer in younger patients.

Common cancer treatments include:

- Surgery
- Radiation
- Chemotherapy
- Hormone therapy
- Targeted medicinal therapy

Although treatment strategies depend on the type of cancer, all treatments seek to kill unhealthy cells but carry risks. For seniors, the risks can be so significant that treatment can't be administered as strongly. This is often the case when seniors already have other medical conditions or physical vulnerabilities.

Seniors with breast cancer should ask their doctors questions about treatment to understand the reasons for the course of treatment prescribed and understand the associated risks.

(NCBI)



### Home Care Tip

The National Breast Cancer Foundation offers a free guide to symptoms that senior women may find helpful. You can help a senior download this guide at [nationalbreastcancer.org](http://nationalbreastcancer.org).

## Prevention and Detection Tips

For those who are 55 and older, these prevention and detection tips can reduce the risk of breast cancer and increase the chances of detecting breast cancer earlier.

- Have a mammogram every other year
- Pay attention to any changes in breasts and report them to your doctor right away
- Talk to a doctor if you are at high risk of breast cancer
- Ask your doctor about tamoxifen and raloxifene if you are at high risk
- Maintain a healthy weight and nutritious diet
- Stay physically active
- Avoid post-menopausal hormones
- Don't smoke

(Siteman Cancer Center)

## By the Numbers

- More than 1/2 of women with breast cancer are over 60
- 1/5 of women with breast cancer are over 70
- There are more than 30 million women who have or have had breast cancer in the US

(Breastcancer.org)