

# BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Breast cancer is a type of cancer that starts in the breast. Breast cancer usually form a tumor that can be seen on an x-ray or felt as a lump.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, although breast cancer is most often found in women, men can get breast cancer too. About **1 out of every 100** breast cancers diagnosed in the United States is found in a man.

In California, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander women have some of the **lowest rates of breast and cervical cancer screening** (pap test, mammography, and clinical breast examination) (Kagawa-Singer & Pourat, 2000).

Native Hawaiian women have **high breast cancer incidence and mortality rates** and are diagnosed at significantly younger ages and more advanced stages than the other ethnic groups in Hawai'i (Hawai'i Cancer Facts and Figures, 2010).



## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

It is important to be aware of how your breasts normally look and feel and to be aware of any changes in your breasts.

- Swelling of all or part of a breast (even if no lump is felt)
- Skin dimpling (sometimes looking like an orange peel)
- Breast or nipple pain
- Nipple retraction (turning inward)
- Nipple or breast skin that is red, dry, flaking or thickened
- Nipple discharge (other than breast milk)
- Swollen lymph nodes (sometimes breast cancer can spread to lymph nodes under the arm or around the collar bone and cause a lump or swelling there)

If you experience any of these signs or symptoms, be sure to speak with a health care professional.



## PREVENTION

Staying healthy throughout your life will lower your risk of developing cancer and improve your chances of surviving cancer if it occurs.

- Keep a healthy weight
- Exercise regularly
- Don't drink alcohol, or limit alcoholic drinks
- If you are taking, or have been told to take, hormone replacement therapy or oral contraceptives (birth control pills), ask your doctor about the risks and find out if it is right for you
- Breastfeed your children, if possible
- If you have a family history of breast cancer or inherited mutations in your BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, talk to your doctor about other ways to lower your risk

## RISK FACTORS

- Getting older
- Genetic mutations to certain genes, such as BRCA1 and BRCA2.
- Reproductive history: early menstrual periods before age 12 and starting menopause after age 55
- Having dense breasts
- Personal history of breast cancer or certain non-cancerous breast diseases
- Family history of breast or ovarian cancer
- Previous treatment using radiation therapy
- Women who took the drug diethylstilbestrol (DES)
- Not being physically active

## RISK FACTORS THAT CAN BE CHANGED

- Being overweight or obese after menopause
- Taking hormones: some forms of hormone replacement therapy and certain oral contraceptives (birth control pills)
- Reproductive history
- Drinking alcohol



## SCREENING

The United States Preventive Services Task Force recommends that women who are **50 to 74 years old and are at average risk for breast cancer get a mammogram every two years.**

**Mammogram** is an X-ray of the breast. For many women, mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat and before it is big enough to feel or cause symptoms.

**Breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)** uses magnets and radio waves to take pictures of the breast. MRI is used along with mammograms to screen women who are at high risk for getting breast cancer.

**Clinical Breast Exam** is an examination by a doctor or nurse, who uses his or her hands to feel for lumps or other changes.

**Breast Self-Awareness** is being familiar with how your breasts look and feel can help you notice symptoms such as lumps, pain, or changes in size that may be of concern.

## RESOURCES

- **American Cancer Society:** [cancer.org/cancer-information-in-other-languages.html](https://cancer.org/cancer-information-in-other-languages.html)
- **National Cancer Institute:** [cancer.gov](https://cancer.gov)
- **'Imi Hale Native Hawaiian Cancer Network:** [imihale.org](https://imihale.org)
- **California State University, Fullerton:** [wincart.fullerton.edu/cancer\\_edu/index.htm](https://wincart.fullerton.edu/cancer_edu/index.htm)
- **Asian American Health Initiative:** [aahiinfo.org](https://aahiinfo.org)
- **Pacific Cancer Programs:** [pacificcancer.org](https://pacificcancer.org)
- **Asian American Cancer Support Network:** [aacsn.org](https://aacsn.org)

Signs and Symptoms, Prevention, Risk Factors, and Screening Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention