Breast cancer in younger women: trends, risks and prevention

The statistics on breast cancer are always alarming. The rise of incidence rates (the frequency new cases occur) in women under 50 is of particular concern. In this age group, the breast cancer incidence rate rose 1.4 percent each year between 2012 and 2022.[1] In women over 50, this rate rose just 1 percent each year.

There are many reasons advanced cancer diagnosis in younger women is increasing.[2]

- Women who are younger when diagnosed are more likely to have aggressive forms of breast cancer.
- Some have inherited BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations, which are common in women of Ashkenazi Jewish descent.
- Younger women are more likely to develop aggressive cancers such as triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC), which more often affects Black women. Its hormone resistance affects the types of treatments available.
- Because routine breast cancer screening usually starts at age 40, younger women may be diagnosed at a more advanced stage, making it harder to treat.

Understanding your risk factors

It's important to be as educated as possible when it comes to breast cancer and your risk. Knowing your personal history, along with your family history,[1] is a great place to start. Ask your family members the hard questions. It's not the time to be discreet when your life could depend on it.

Women may be at higher risk for breast cancer[1] if they:

- Had their first menstrual period before age 12.
- Had their first pregnancy over age 30 or have not had children.
- If one or more family members:
  - → have been diagnosed with breast cancer before age 50.
  - → had cancer in both breasts.
  - → had male breast cancer.
  - → had ovarian, pancreatic or prostate cancer that spread (metastatic).

Things you can do:[3]

Learn how to do a breast self-exam.
Get to know your body and what's normal for you. Let your healthcare provider know right away if there are any changes.

Be physically active.
At least 30 minutes of moderate activity, five times per week is recommended.

Advocate for yourself.
Talk to your healthcare provider about timing for a baseline mammogram, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), ultrasound or other screening options and what intervals are appropriate for you.

Eat healthy food.
Nutrient-rich fruits, vegetables, lean protein and whole grains are best. Limit processed foods and avoid sweetened beverages.

Know where you stand.
Access the Tyrer-Cuzick risk assessment calculator, available free online.[4] Discuss your score with your healthcare provider.

Make healthy choices.
Avoid or limit alcohol. Don't smoke or use tobacco.

Get to and stay at a healthy weight.
Talk to your healthcare provider about what's right for you.

Get regular physicals.
Make sure clinical breast exams are included.

Knowing your risks, increasing healthy behaviors and advocating for your care sets you up for the best possible outcome.[5]

Learn how Teladoc Health can help support you on your wellness journey. To sign up or learn more, go to TeladocHealth.com/smile/STATEOFIOWA.

Before starting any new exercise routine, talk to your healthcare provider to make sure it's safe.

[1]https://www.bcrf.org/about-breast-cancer/breast-cancer-young-women/
[2]https://medicine.washu.edu/news/breast-cancer-rates-increasing-among-younger-women/#
[3]https://www.cdc.gov/breast-ovarian-cancer-hereditary/managing-risk/index.html
[4]https://magview.com/ibis-risk-calculator/
[5]https://www.komen.org/breast-cancer/treatment/by-diagnosis/young-women-and-breast-cancer/

Las comunicaciones del programa Teladoc Health están disponibles en español. Al inscribirse, podrá configurar el idioma que prefiera para las comunicaciones provenientes del medidor y del programa. Para inscribirse en español, llame al 800-835-2362 o visite TeladocHealth.com/bienvenido/STATEOFIOWA

Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa, Wellmark Health Plan of Iowa, Inc. and Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Blue Cross®, Blue Shield® and the Cross® and Shield® symbols are registered marks of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an Association of Independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans. Wellmark® is a registered mark of Wellmark, Inc.

Livongo Health, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Teladoc Health, Inc., ("Livongo") is an independent company providing diabetes prevention and diabetes management services to Wellmark customers.
© Teladoc Health, Inc. All rights reserved. Teladoc Health marks and logos are owned by Teladoc Health, Inc. All programs and services are subject to applicable terms and conditions.