

## Some risk factors linked to a higher risk (in alphabetical order):

- Alcohol use
- Ashkenazi Jewish heritage
- Being a woman
- Being overweight (or weight gain after menopause)
- Current or recent use of birth control pills
- Current or recent use of menopausal hormones
- Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS)
- Exposure to large amounts of radiation at a young age
- Family or personal history of breast, ovarian or prostate cancer
- Getting older
- High breast density on a mammogram
- Hyperplasia or lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS)
- Inherited *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* gene mutation
- Lack of exercise
- Never having children or having a first child after age 35
- Not breastfeeding
- Younger age at first period/older age at menopause

For more information about risk factors go to [www.komen.org/risk](http://www.komen.org/risk).

## Resources

Susan G. Komen®  
1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)  
[www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

American Cancer Society  
1-800-ACS-2345  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

National Cancer Institute  
1-800-4-CANCER  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

### Related fact sheets in this series:

- Ductal Carcinoma in Situ
- Genetics and Breast Cancer
- Types of Breast Cancer Tumors

The above list of resources is only a suggested resource and is not a complete listing of breast cancer materials or information. The information contained herein is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional. Komen does not endorse, recommend or make any warranties or representations regarding the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, quality or non-infringement of any of the materials, products or information provided by the organizations referenced herein.

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FACTS FOR LIFE

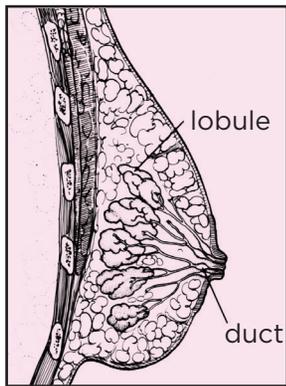
# Breast Cancer & Risk



For more information, visit [komen.org](http://komen.org) or call Susan G. Komen's breast care helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 10 PM ET.

Every day, cells in your body divide, grow and die in an orderly manner. Breast cancer is a family of diseases where cells in the breast tissue grow and divide without normal control. This growth of cells forms a mass or lump called a tumor. Tumors are either benign (not cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). By the time a malignant tumor is large enough to feel, it may have been growing for as long as 10 years.

## Did you know?



### Non-invasive breast cancer - Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS)

The term “in situ” means “in place”. It describes a cancer that has not spread beyond where it began. DCIS occurs when abnormal cells grow inside the milk ducts, but have not spread to nearby tissue or beyond.

### Invasive breast cancer

Cancer cells that spread from inside the milk ducts or lobules into surrounding tissue is invasive breast cancer. There are many types of invasive breast cancer.

### Metastatic breast cancer

Invasive breast cancer that spreads to other parts of the body, such as the liver, lungs, bones and brain is metastatic breast cancer. It is sometimes called stage IV or advanced breast cancer. Note that metastatic breast cancer is not a type of breast cancer, but a stage of disease.

## What affects your risk of getting breast cancer?

The causes of breast cancer are not fully known. However, researchers have found things that increase (or decrease) the chance of getting breast cancer. These are called risk factors.

Some factors you may be able to control (like your weight or exercise). Others are out of your control (like your age or family history). The two most common risk factors for breast cancer are being a woman and getting older.

Most controllable risk factors only have a small effect on risk. This means no one behavior will prevent breast cancer. It also means there’s no one thing that will cause it.

## What about genes?

Genes control the way our cells divide and grow. When a change (called a mutation) occurs, the genes do not work like they should. Mutations may be spontaneous (occur on their own) or inherited (passed on from your mother or father).

## Get the facts about breast cancer!

*Myth:* I’m only 35. Breast cancer happens only in older women.

**Fact:** While the risk of breast cancer increases with age, ALL women are at risk. Even women in their 20s can get breast cancer.

*Myth:* Only women with a family history of breast cancer get breast cancer.

**Fact:** Most women who get breast cancer have no family history of the disease.

*Myth:* If I don’t have a *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* gene mutation, I won’t get breast cancer.

**Fact:** Most women who get breast cancer do not have a *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* gene mutation.

*Myth:* If I eat right, don’t smoke, exercise and don’t drink alcohol, I won’t get breast cancer.

**Fact:** A person can do everything “right” and still get breast cancer.

