



"Start the Conversation, Make Breast Cancer Screening Part of Your Wellness Plan."

Breast cancer affects the lives of many North Dakota women. In fact, a woman's lifetime risk of developing breast cancer is approximately one in eight. The majority of us know someone that has been affected by the disease in some way. That's why it's important to start conversations with our family members, friends and co-workers to emphasize that breast cancer screening, along with a woman's awareness of what is normal for her, is the best protection in early detection of the disease.

It is important for women to be informed and to take an active part in the decision-making process with her healthcare provider regarding breast cancer screening.

Three key things can help guide the decision-making process:

- Identifying your breast cancer risks
- Knowing what breast cancer screenings are available
- Developing a list of questions to bring to your healthcare provider about breast cancer screening

Tests That Screen for Breast Cancer

- Mammogram
- Clinical breast exam
- Other tests may be recommended by your provider based on your health history

Each woman should have a discussion with her healthcare provider about what test(s) should be done, how often they should occur and what age she should begin and stop screening for breast cancer.

Breast Self-Awareness

Being aware of what your breasts normally feel and look like is called breast self-awareness. Report any changes you notice to your healthcare provider.

Questions That May Be Helpful in the Discussion with Your Health care Provider

1. Should I have clinical breast exams? If so, how often?
2. When should I start getting regular mammograms and how often? At what age should I stop having a regular mammogram?
3. What should I do to prepare for my mammogram?
4. Do I have dense breasts? If so, should I have a mammogram or another test?
5. How long will it take to get the results of my mammogram?
6. If I have questions about my mammogram results, who do I ask?
7. If I have breast cancer risks, what are they and do these risk factors affect the type and frequency of breast cancer screening tests recommended?
8. If I have questions about what my health insurance will pay, regarding the tests ordered for me, who do I talk to?

Breast Cancer Risk Factors

A breast cancer risk factor is anything that makes it more likely you'll get breast cancer, but having one or even several breast cancer risk factors doesn't necessarily mean you'll develop breast cancer. Many women who develop breast cancer have no known risk factors other than simply being women.

Breast Cancer Risk Factors You Cannot Change:

- **Being female**
- **Increasing age**
- **A personal history of breast cancer.** If you've had breast cancer in one breast, you have an increased risk of developing cancer in the other breast
- **A family history of breast cancer.** If your mother, sister or daughter was diagnosed with breast cancer, particularly at a young age, your risk of breast cancer is increased
- **Inherited genes that increase cancer risk.** Certain gene mutations that increase the risk of breast cancer can be passed from parents to children. The most common gene mutations are referred to as BRCA1 and BRCA2
- **Radiation exposure.** If you received radiation treatments to your chest as a child or young adult, your risk of breast cancer is increased
- **Beginning your period at a younger age.** Beginning your period before age 12 increases your risk of breast cancer
- **Beginning menopause at an older age.** If you began menopause at an older age, you're more likely to develop breast cancer
- **Dense breast tissue.** This is seen on a mammogram. Breasts are made up of fatty tissue, fibrous tissue and glandular tissue. Dense breast tissue means the breast is more glandular and fibrous and there is less fatty tissue

Lifestyle Related Factors That Increase Your Risk:

- **Having your first child after age 35**
- **Having never been pregnant**
- **Postmenopausal hormone therapy**
- **Being overweight or obese**
- **Drinking more than 2 alcoholic beverages a day**

Lifestyle-related factors that decrease your risk:

- **Breastfeeding**
- **Physical Activity**