

## Lowering Your Risk for Breast Cancer



Lifestyle changes have been shown in studies to decrease breast cancer risk even in high-risk women. The following are steps you can take to lower your risk:

1. **Don't Smoke.** Not smoking is one of the best things you can do for your overall health.
2. **Control your weight.** Being overweight or obese increases the risk of breast cancer, particularly if it occurs later in life.
3. **Be physically active.** The Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity per week, plus strength training at least twice a week.
4. **Breast-feed.** Breast-feeding might play a role in breast cancer prevention. The longer you breast feed, the greater the protective effort.
5. **Limit does and duration of hormone therapy.** Combination hormone therapy for more than three to five years increases the risk of breast cancer.
6. **Avoid exposure to radiation and environmental pollution.** While more studies are needed, some research suggests a link between breast cancer and radiation exposure through medical-imaging methods, such as computerized tomography.
7. **Be vigilant about breast cancer detection.** If you notice any changes in your breasts, such as a new lump or skin change, talk to your doctor.

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## Breast Cancer Awareness

*Cancer* is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. When cancer starts in the breast, it is called *breast cancer*. Except for skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer in American women.

A *mammogram* is an X-ray picture of the breast and is 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.

**Most women who are 50 to 74 years old should have a screening mammogram every two years.** If you are 40 to 49, or think you may have a higher risk of breast cancer, ask your doctor when to have a screening mammogram.

**Some things may increase your risk.** If you have *risk factors*, you may be more likely to get breast cancer. Talk to your doctor about ways to lower your risk and about screening.

### Reproductive risk factors:

- Being younger when you had your first menstrual period
- Never giving birth, or being older at the birth of your first child
- Starting menopause at a later age
- Using hormone replacement therapy for a long time

### Other risk factors:

- Getting older
- A personal history of breast cancer, dense breasts, or some other breast problems
- A family history of breast cancer (parent, sibling, or child)
- Changes in your breast cancer-related genes (BRCA1 or BRCA2)
- Getting radiation therapy to the breast or chest
- Being overweight, especially after menopause

### Some warning signs of breast cancer:

- A lump or pain in the breast
- Thickening or swelling of part of the breast
- Irritation or dimpling of breast skin
- Redness or flaky skin on the breast
- Pulling in of the nipple or pain in the nipple area
- Fluid other than breast milk from the nipple, especially blood
- A change in the size or the shape of the breast



## Autumn Health and Safety Tips

Follow these tips to help you and your family stay safe and healthy this autumn!

**Keep your kids safe and healthy.** Get involved with your kids' activities at home and at school to help ensure they are safe and healthy.

**Take steps to prevent illness.** The single best way to protect against illness is to get vaccinated. Mask up if required. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Wash your hands often. Stay home if you get sick.

**Wash your hands.** Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. It's best to wash your hands with soap and clean running water for 20 seconds. If that's not possible, use alcohol-based hand rubs.

**Get smart about antibiotics.** Antibiotics can cure bacterial infections, but not viral infections. Covid, the common cold, and the flu are viral infections, so avoid using antibiotics if you have one of these. Using antibiotics when they are not needed causes some bacteria to become resistant to the antibiotic, and therefore stronger and harder to kill. See your doctor or nurse to find out if your illness is bacterial or viral.

**Test and replace batteries.** Check or replace carbon monoxide batteries twice a year when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. Replace smoke alarm alkaline batteries at least once a year. Test alarms every month to ensure they work properly.

**Keep food safe.** Food is center stage during the holidays. Be sure to keep it safe by following basic food safety steps. Clean hands and surfaces often. Separate foods to avoid cross-contamination. Cook to proper temperatures. Chill promptly.

**Learn your family history.** National Family History Day is observed on Thanksgiving Day. Over the holiday or at another family gathering, talk about and write down the health conditions that run in your family. Learning about your family's health history can help you take steps to ensure a longer, healthier future together.

**Be prepared for cold weather.** Exposure to cold temperatures can cause serious health problems. Infants and the elderly are particularly at risk, but anyone can be affected. Know how to prevent health problems and what to do if a cold-weather emergency arises. Remember that using space heaters and fireplaces can increase the risk of household fires and carbon monoxide poisoning.

**Don't drink and drive.** Alcohol use impairs skills needed to drive a car safely. It slows reaction time and impairs judgement and coordination. Alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes kill someone every 31 minutes and non-fatally injure someone every two minutes. Don't drink and drive, and don't let others drink and drive.

**Have a safe and healthy Halloween.** Make Halloween festivities fun, safe, and healthy for trick-or-treaters and party guests.



## Tools and Tips for a Cleaner Kitchen

October kicks off the holiday food season! Even if you're diligent about scouring the floor and wiping the countertops, no kitchen will be 100 percent germ- or bacteria-free. Still, minimizing your chances of getting sick can be simple if you use some food-cleaning know-how and helpful utensils.

### USEFUL TOOLS

A colander (or strainer) allows you to wash fruits and vegetables quickly and safely because it lessens the risk of contamination from other foods, such as raw meat that might have been in the sink earlier. Look for a self-standing model so that you can rinse food with one hand and tumble it around in the colander with the other.

A corer can be used to remove the least edible parts of apples, pears, pineapples, and other hard fruits and vegetables. Look for a blade large enough to remove the whole core, or your produce could have bits of seed attached.

A vegetable brush is best for washing potatoes and other root vegetables and hard-skinned fruits such as cantaloupe, mango, and watermelon. It can reach into crevices that running water and paper towels can't. Look for brushes that fit your hand and are comfortable to use. When scrubbing tender fruits such as plums, use brushes with softer bristles, such as nylon.

### CLEANING TIPS

Some tools are useful, but you can do without other products. For example, you don't need to buy a produce wash. Friction and running water are enough to help remove soil from produce, says Linda Harris, Ph.D., a food-safety specialist at the University of California, Davis. Drying fruit and vegetables with a paper towel might remove more surface bacteria.

Wash refrigerator bins with dish detergent in warm water. Crisper drawers hold more bacteria than any other part of the refrigerator. Wash them often in a clean sink. After drying thoroughly with paper towels, spray the bins with a homemade sanitizing solution (1 tablespoon of bleach to 1 gallon of water) and let stand for at least 15 seconds, then dry thoroughly again with paper towels before returning them to the refrigerator.

