

## Breast Cancer Causes

Medical research has taken great steps in pinpointing the causes of breast cancer. Thanks to these advances, it is now possible to determine who is at greater risk or contracting the disease.

There is currently a lot of interest and research linking breast cancer with genetics. An abnormal gene known as BRACA1 can be inherited, thus increasing the risk of developing breast cancer to almost 85%. BRACA1 increases the risk for a woman to develop breast cancer at an early age, and also presents an increased risk of developing ovarian cancer.

Another abnormal gene, BRACA2 also increases the risk of developing breast cancer, however it does not pose an increased risk of developing ovarian cancer. Testing for these genes is very expensive and most medical insurances will not cover the cost. Further, women who test positive will find it difficult to obtain medical insurance. Those women wishing to be tested should discuss their options with their doctor, as many complicated issues surround the procedure.

Other influences that can affect the development of breast cancer. Women starting menstrual cycles at an early age, and those with late menopause, have a greater chance of developing breast cancer. Those who experience early menopause or are older at the time of their first menstrual periods may actually be protected from breast cancer. Those women who bore children before the age of 30 have a reduced breast cancer risk; however, women who have not had children are more like to develop the disease. There is no conclusive evidence to prove if oral contraceptives will increase or reduce a woman's chance of having breast cancer.

Extensive research has shown that there is an increased risk of developing breast cancer in postmenopausal women who have taken a combination of estrogen and progesterone replacements for several years. Therefore, it is imperative that women discuss the pros and cons with a medical professional before taking any kind of hormone therapy.

Diet is listed as one of the non-genetic breast cancer causes. The disease appears to occur more frequently in those countries that have a higher intake of fat. This is believed to be more of an environmental influence, rather than genetic. One example to illustrate this is in Japan. Japanese women who reside in Japan face a relatively low breast cancer risk. This risk increases, however, when they begin residing in the United States where environment and diet trends tend to differ.

However, studies comparing groups of women with high and low fat diets have failed to show a difference in the rates of developing breast cancer.

Naturally occurring changes to the breast, such as fibrocystic, are very common. Fibrocystic breasts are lumpy with thickened tissue and can be uncomfortable, particularly before a menstrual period. It is important to understand that this condition does not contribute to breast cancer.

Other types of benign changes in the breast, such as proliferative and hyperplastic, may contribute to the development of breast cancer later in life. Women who have experienced these conditions must have regular breast examinations.

Radiation treatment is also one of the known breast cancer causes. Radiation can contribute to an increased risk of developing breast cancer, typically after a long delay such as 15 years.

Thanks to tireless medical research, women are now able to understand breast cancer causes and realize if they are at risk. With more hard work and a few prayers, professionals in the medical field may be able to use these findings and develop a cure for breast cancer.