

Department of Medical Genetics

Breast Cancer in the Family – What does this mean for you?

Information for women with a low or moderate lifetime risk of breast cancer

Some families carry an inherited mutation which predisposes them to breast cancer. However, these mutations are rare; breast cancer is fairly common and genetic mutations cause only a very small percentage of all breast cancers. This means that many women with one relative and some women with two relatives affected by breast cancer are not at significantly increased risk of the disease compared with the general population.

How common is breast cancer?

In the UK, breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer affecting women. Most women in this country have about 1 chance in 10 of developing breast cancer in their lifetime. However, most women who develop breast cancer are over sixty and breast cancer in this older age group tends to respond better to treatment.

What type of family history suggests an inherited tendency to develop breast cancer?

A very small number of women who develop breast cancer have an inherited tendency towards this type of cancer. This tendency is generally only found in families where:
Either at least three close relatives (usually on the same side of the family) develop breast cancer before the menopause
Or some relatives have had breast cancer and others have had ovarian cancer.

What is a “low” risk of breast cancer?

If you have been told that your lifetime risk of developing breast cancer is “low” then your chance of developing breast cancer is no different from, or not much different from, the chance of any other woman in the population and it is likely that the breast cancer in your family is due to chance and not to any inherited tendency.

Do women with a “low” risk of breast cancer need breast screening?

Women at “low “ risk do not need to have breast screening before the age of fifty. Between the ages of 50 and 64, mammograms are offered every three years on the National Breast Screening Programme.

What is a “moderate” risk of breast cancer?

If you have been told that your lifetime risk of developing breast cancer is “moderate” then you have a somewhat increased chance of developing breast cancer at some stage in your lifetime. Even if you have a moderately increased risk of breast cancer, you are still much more likely **not** to get breast cancer than to get it and it is unlikely that the breast cancer in your family is due to a gene mutation.

Do women with a “moderate” risk of breast cancer need breast screening?

If you are told that you are at “moderate” risk of breast cancer, you will be offered mammograms every three years between the ages of 50 and 64 on the National Breast Screening Programme and you will be given the opportunity to discuss with a specialist whether you might benefit from extra breast screening before the age of fifty.

What should you do if someone else in your family develops breast or ovarian cancer after your risk has been assessed?

This may not alter your chance of developing this type of cancer but please let us know and we will look at your family history again.

What can you do to keep a check on yourself?

If you are aware of how your breasts normally look and feel, you are more likely to notice any changes. If you do notice any change, go to your GP who will refer you to a specialist if necessary.

If you need more advice about any aspect of inherited breast cancer, you are welcome to contact:

The Genetic Counsellors, Medical Genetics Department, Box 134, Addenbrooke's NHS Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge CB2 2QQ

Tel: 01223 216446

Fax 01223 217054

This leaflet is based on an original leaflet written by the Clinical Genetics Department, Guy's Hospital, London

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format:
01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Potete chiedere di ottenere queste informazioni in altre lingue, in stampato grande o in audiocassetta.

Italian

若你需要本信息的繁體中文、大字體或音訊格式的版本，請要求索取。

Cantonese

तमने आ माहिती वीछ भाषाओमां, मोटा अक्षरोमां अथवा सांभली शकाय जेवा माध्यम (ओडीओ इमेज)मां जेठती छोय तो कृपा करीने पूछो.

Gujarati

تکایه پرسیار بکه نه گهر نه وزانیاریهت دهوی به زمانیکی تر , به بیستی گهوره یانیش به شیوهی دهنگ

Kurdish

آگر آپ کو یہ معلومات دوسری زبانوں میں، بڑے الفاظ کی اشاعت میں یا آڈیو ٹیپ پر درکار ہوں تو براۓ مہربانی اس کیلئے درخواست کریں۔

Urdu



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Document history

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