

## Do men get breast cancer?

Breast cancer in men is rare, but it does happen. After all, men have breast tissue also. The overall ratio of female to male breast cancer in the U.S. is 100 to 1.<sup>1</sup> Although it sounds like a small number, that is still roughly 1,990 men who will be diagnosed, and about 450 who will die of the disease in 2008.<sup>2</sup>

The most common symptoms of male breast cancer include a lump in the chest area, skin dimpling or puckering or nipple changes. Because breast cancer is so much more common in females, many men do not even realize they can develop this disease. Unfortunately, this can delay diagnosis and as a result, some cancers are not found until they have progressed to a later stage. However, when cancer is found at the same stage among men and women, the survival rates are similar. Because the male breast is much smaller than the female breast, it is more likely the disease will spread to the chest wall. For this reason, it is important to find the cancer early in order to successfully treat it. See your doctor if you have any persistent lumps or changes in your chest area.



1 Harris (Ed) Diseases of the Breast 3rd ed. Male Breast Cancer by Gradishar, William, 2004 (Lippencott).

2 American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts & Figures 2008

## A man's risk

Known factors that increase your risk of breast cancer include:

- a genetic condition such as Klinefelter's syndrome that is associated with high estrogen levels
- family members (male or female) with breast cancer, especially with a BRCA2 mutation
- chronic liver disorders, alcoholism and obesity
- getting older

## How do I know if I have breast cancer?

The steps used to diagnose breast cancer in men include a complete medical history, clinical breast exam, mammogram and biopsy.

The types of breast cancer found in men are the same as those found in women, as are the staging system and patterns of how the disease spreads. Thus, treatments for breast cancer in men are the same as treatments for breast cancer in women. A mastectomy is a surgical procedure to remove the breast with the cancerous tumor. It is generally the treatment of

choice for male breast cancer. Chemotherapy, radiation and hormone therapies are also used following surgery. For more information, please refer to the fact sheets on *Breast Cancer Detection and Breast Surgery*.

## Resources

Although breast cancer is rare among men, information and other resources are available to help men with breast cancer. The organizations listed below will help you get the information and support you need.

### Asking the right questions

When first diagnosed with breast cancer, many men are in shock. After all, breast cancer is a women's disease, right? Not always. Do not let the surprise of this diagnosis distract you from the seriousness of this disease. It is very important for you to ask questions and gather as much information as you can in order to make decisions about your treatment. Here are some questions to ask your doctor:

1. What type of breast cancer do I have? Is it in situ [in SY-too] (cancer is localized and has not spread to nearby tissue) or invasive (cancer has spread to surrounding breast tissue)?
2. What is the stage of my cancer?
3. What treatments are appropriate for my type of cancer? Which one do you recommend and why?
4. How can I prepare for treatment? What side effects should I expect?
5. What is my prognosis or expected outcome?

### Organizations

Susan G. Komen for the Cure® — promises to save lives and end breast cancer forever by empowering people, ensuring quality care for all and energizing science to find the cures.

1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)

[www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

American Cancer Society — has research, education and patient service programs to help cancer patients and their families cope with cancer.

1-800-ACS-2345

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

*Breast Cancer*™ Network of Strength — provides immediate emotional relief to anyone affected by breast cancer.

1-800-221-2141 (English) or

1-800-986-9505 (Spanish)

[www.networkofstrength.org](http://www.networkofstrength.org)

### Related fact sheets in this series:

- Breast Cancer Detection
- Breast Surgery
- Treatment Choices — An Overview

The above list of resources is only a suggested resource and is not a complete listing of breast health and 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 for the Cure 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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