

Spot breast cancer early

If you want to know more about spotting the signs of breast cancer, this information is for you.

Breast cancer is much more common in people over the age of 50, but it can affect anyone of any age or sex.

If you spot something unusual, tell your doctor. In most cases it won't be cancer, but if it is, finding it at an early stage means treatment is more likely to be successful.



Listen to your body

It's important to listen to your body, and get any unusual changes to your breasts, chest or nipples checked out by your GP.

The symptoms listed here are more likely to be signs of other conditions that aren't cancer. But it's still best to get any unusual changes checked out.

- A new lump or thickening in your breast, chest or armpit
- Any skin changes on your breast, chest or nipple, such as puckering, dimpling, redness, or a rash
- A change in the look or position of a nipple
- A change in the size, shape or feel of your breast or chest
- Fluid leaking from a nipple if you aren't pregnant or breastfeeding
- Unexplained pain in your breast, chest or armpit



Breast awareness

Being breast aware means knowing what your breasts and chest normally look and feel like, which may make it easier to spot any changes. This includes knowing what your breasts are like at different times of the month. There's no right or wrong way of doing this.



Talk to your doctor

Whether it's via phone, video or face-to-face, your doctor wants to hear about any unusual changes you're experiencing. If you're worried about talking to a doctor, here are some tips:

✓ Be prepared

Think about how to describe any changes and how long you've had them for. Writing down what you want to say and ask can help.

✓ Be honest

Tell the doctor about anything unusual, even if it doesn't seem important or you think it might be embarrassing. Your doctor is a professional and is used to helping with lots of different symptoms.

✓ Be thorough

Mention all your symptoms and don't put it down to 'just getting older', or assume it's part of another health condition.

✓ Stick with it

Don't worry about wasting your GP's time. Even if you're struggling to get an appointment, or you've been to see them already, they want to know if something's still not right.



Breast screening

Breast screening is for people who don't have any symptoms.

It aims to find breast cancers at an early stage, when treatment is more likely to be successful.

If you're aged 50–70 and registered as female with the GP, you'll be sent an invitation in the post.

If you aren't invited for screening, but think you should be, speak to your GP or Gender Identity Clinic.

It's your choice whether to attend breast screening. Read about the pros and cons in the information that comes with your invite.

Even if you've been screened and no matter your age, tell your doctor if you notice anything unusual.



Cut your risk

✓ Keep a healthy weight

Weight has a big impact on cancer risk. It can be hard, but start with small changes to your diet and activity levels that you can stick to.

✓ Cut back on alcohol

Alcohol increases the risk of seven types of cancer, including breast cancer. The less you drink, the lower your risk.

What else might affect your risk?

Most breast cancers aren't from inherited genes, but if a close relative has had it, your risk may be higher.

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and oral contraceptives (the pill) both increase breast cancer risk, but they have benefits too.

Speak to your doctor if you're worried about your breast cancer risk.



Early diagnosis saves lives

What if it is cancer?

Cancer survival is increasing – more people are surviving their cancer today than ever before.

When cancer is spotted at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be successful. And thanks to research, treatments are now kinder and more effective than ever.

How to find out more

Visit our website

Find out more about spotting cancer early, including information about cancer screening across the UK, at: cruk.org/spotcancerearly

Give us a call

Our Nurse Helpline is there if you're looking for information or support. Just call **0808 800 4040**.

If you'd like to provide any feedback on this leaflet or would like to know more about the information sources used to create it, please email publications@cancer.org.uk And if you have any questions about Cancer Research UK or would like to support what we're doing, you can call **0300 123 1022**.

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