

What is Breast Cancer Awareness Month?

Breast Cancer Awareness Month is an annual campaign to raise awareness of breast cancer risks, the value of screening and early detection, and treatment options available to women and men who are diagnosed with one of the many forms of breast cancer.

Breast cancer facts

Breast cancer starts when cells in the breast begin to grow out of control. These cells usually form a tumor that can often be seen on an X-ray or felt as a lump. The tumor is malignant if the cells can grow into surrounding tissues or spread to distant areas of the body. Breast cancer occurs almost entirely in women, but men can get breast cancer, too.

Knowing how your breasts normally look and feel is an important part of breast health. Finding breast cancer as early as possible gives you a better chance of successful treatment. The most common symptom of breast cancer is a new lump or mass. It is important to have any new breast mass or lump or breast change checked by a healthcare provider experienced in diagnosing breast diseases. Other possible symptoms include:

- Swelling of all or part of a breast
- Skin irritation or dimpling
- Breast or nipple pain
- Nipple retraction (turning inward)
- Redness, scaliness, or thickening of the nipple or breast skin
- Nipple discharge

Awareness of what to look for does not take the place of having regular mammograms and other screening tests. Screening tests can help find breast cancer in its early stages, even before any symptoms appear.

Mobile apps

- [B4BC](#)
- [CareZone](#)
- [iPharmacy](#)
- [My Cancer Coach App](#)

Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Martin Hickey, MD**, NMHC's Chief Executive Officer. Many factors over the course of a lifetime can influence your breast cancer risk. You can't change some factors like getting older or your family history, but you can help lower your risk of breast cancer by taking care of your health by taking the following actions:

- Keep a healthy weight.
- Exercise regularly (at least four hours a week).
- Don't drink alcohol, or limit alcoholic drinks to no more than one per day.
- Avoid exposure to chemicals that can cause cancer and chemicals that interfere with the normal function of the body.
- Limit exposure to radiation from medical imaging tests like X-rays, CT scans, and PET scans if not medically necessary.
- Breastfeed any children you may have, if possible.

Staying healthy throughout your life will lower your risk of developing cancer, and improve your chances of surviving cancer if it occurs. Talk to your doctor about more ways to lower your risk.

Additional resources

- [American Cancer Society](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [HealthFinder.gov](#)
- [National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc.](#)