

Breast cancer risk assessment: moderate risk

This leaflet is for women with a moderate risk of breast cancer (following a family history risk assessment). This information has been produced by Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and East Kent Hospitals' Breast Cancer Nurse Specialists

If you have any queries, please contact the:

Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Service

Telephone: 01227 86 86 66

Email: ekh-tr.breastfamilyhistory@nhs.net

What is a moderate risk of breast cancer?

Breast cancer is a common disease. In the general population about one in eight women in the UK will develop breast cancer.



If you have a moderate risk of breast cancer this means that your risk of getting breast cancer is higher than the risk for women with no family history of the disease. You are still much more likely not to get breast cancer than you are to develop it.



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

Yes. Screening for women with a family history of breast cancer is based on nationally recommended guidelines. These can be found on the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence website www.nice.org.uk

Current guidelines recommend that women with a moderate risk of breast cancer have mammograms once a year from **40 to 49 years old**. There is no evidence that screening before the age of 40 is helpful for women with a moderate risk, even if your relatives have had breast cancer before this age. Also some young women have breast tissue that is too 'dense' (tightly packed) for a mammogram to produce clear images.

Women **aged 50 to 70** with a moderate risk of breast cancer are offered mammograms every three years, like all other women in the UK. You will not need a mammogram more often than women in the general population because:

- breast cancer is easier to see on a mammogram after the menopause; and
- if breast cancer does occur, it is likely to grow more slowly in women aged 50 or over.

Women **over 70 years old** can request that breast cancer screening continues every three years, if they wish.

For more information, please ask a member of staff for a copy of the **NHS breast screening: helping you decide** leaflet.

All women are encouraged to be breast aware. Contact your GP if you notice any changes in your breasts. Please do not wait until your next mammogram.

Can anything alter breast cancer risk?

Yes, the following can alter the risk.

- The oral contraceptive pill and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) slightly increase the risk of breast cancer while a woman is taking it, and for up to five years after it is stopped.
- Alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer.
- Pregnancy and breastfeeding lower the risk of breast cancer.
- Being overweight increases the risk of breast cancer for women after the menopause.
- Regular exercise lowers the risk of breast cancer.
- Eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and lowering cholesterol intake helps lower the risk of cancer.
- If anyone else in your family develops cancer, particularly breast or ovarian cancer, then this could alter your risk. If this happens, please ask for a reassessment of your risk.

What about genetic testing?

Although breast cancer is common, having an inherited tendency (also called a genetic predisposition) to developing breast cancer is quite rare. Only about 5 to 10% of all breast cancers happen because of an inherited tendency.

Currently genetic testing is not offered to families with a moderate risk of breast cancer. This is because the chance of finding a genetic predisposition to developing breast cancer is low. This may change in the future as more is discovered about the role of genes in cancer.

Useful contacts

- **Breast Cancer Now**
Telephone: 0808 800 6000
Web: www.breastcancernow.org.uk
- **Macmillan Cancer Support**
Telephone: 0808 800 0000
Web: www.macmillan.org.uk

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation