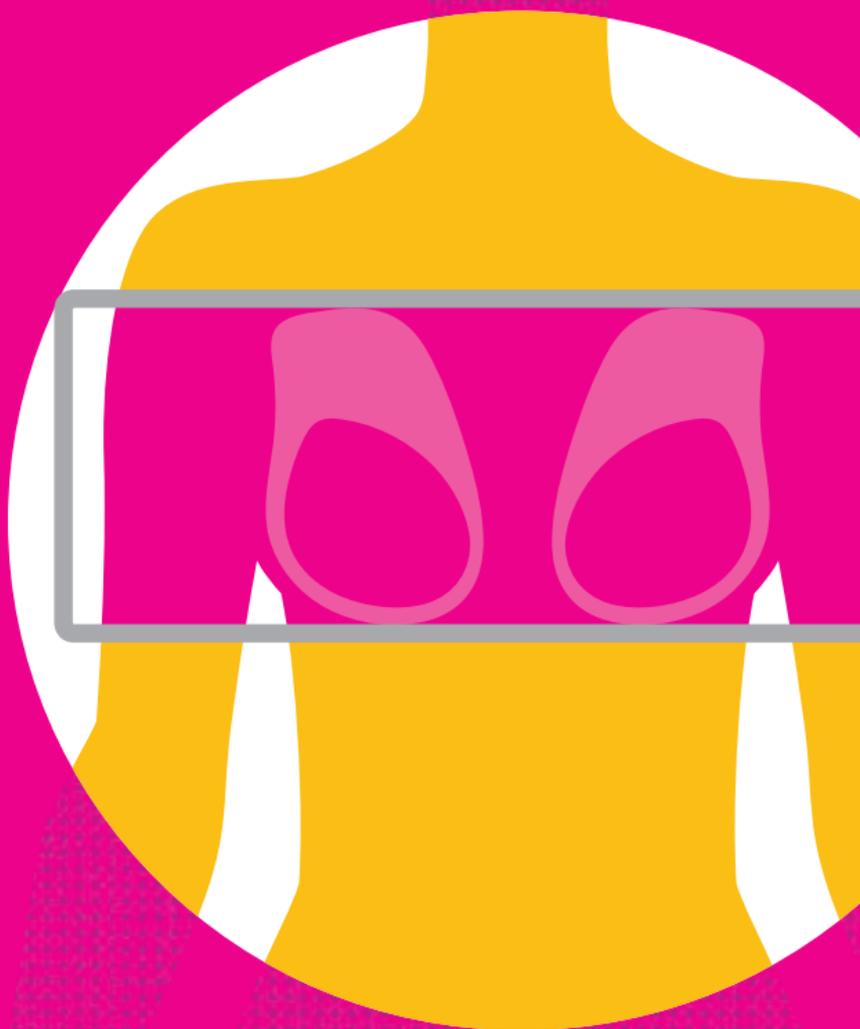


Breast Cancer

What you should know

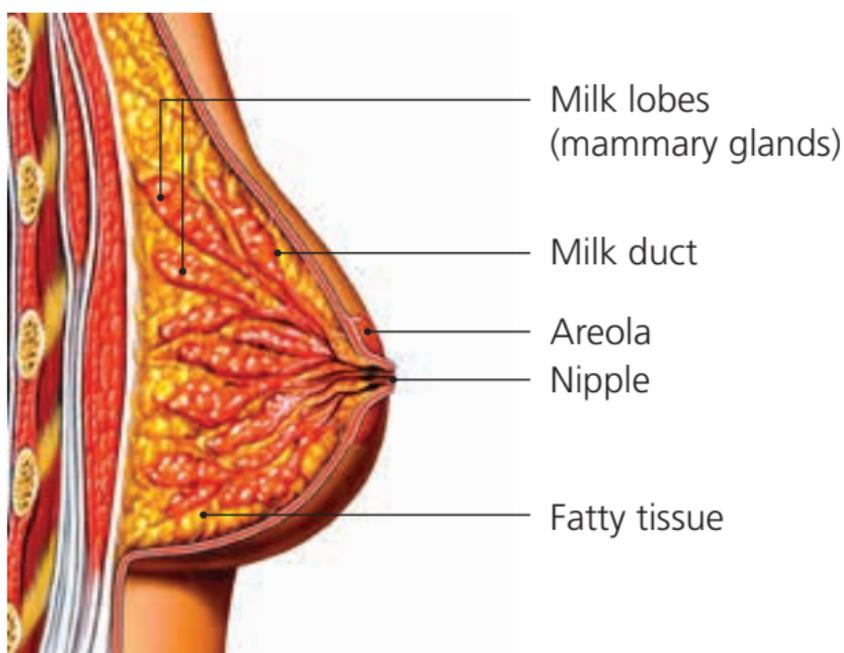


What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is when the normal cells in your breast grow in an abnormal way to form a lump called a tumour.

Your breasts are made up of different types of tissue including fat, connective tissue and gland tissue. The gland tissue is divided into milk lobes and milk ducts. The lobes make and store breast milk after pregnancy and the ducts carry milk to the nipple.

Your breasts are rarely the same size as each other. They may feel different at different times of your menstrual cycle, sometimes becoming lumpy just before your period.



What can increase my risk of breast cancer?

The most common risk factors for breast cancer are:



Age

Being a woman over the age of 50.



Family history

Breast cancer and/or ovarian cancer in several close members of your family. Breast cancer in a close relative when they were under the age of 50.



Hormones

Starting periods before the age of 12 or having menopause after the age of 55. Also, prolonged use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT). HRT is a hormonal drug used to treat menopausal symptoms.



The pill

Taking the contraceptive pill. This causes a small increase in risk, which gradually returns to normal after you stop taking it.



Having no children

Having no children or having your first child later in life slightly increases your risk.



Previous breast disease

Being diagnosed before with breast cancer or atypical ductal hyperplasia (ADH).



Radiotherapy

Having had radiotherapy to your chest area in the past.



Lifestyle

An unhealthy lifestyle such as being overweight, not being active, drinking alcohol or smoking. For more information, see www.cancer.ie/reduce-your-risk or call our Cancer Nurseline on Freephone 1800 200 700.

Risk factors increase your chance of getting breast cancer, but having a risk factor doesn't mean you will get breast cancer. Sometimes people with no risk factors may get the disease.



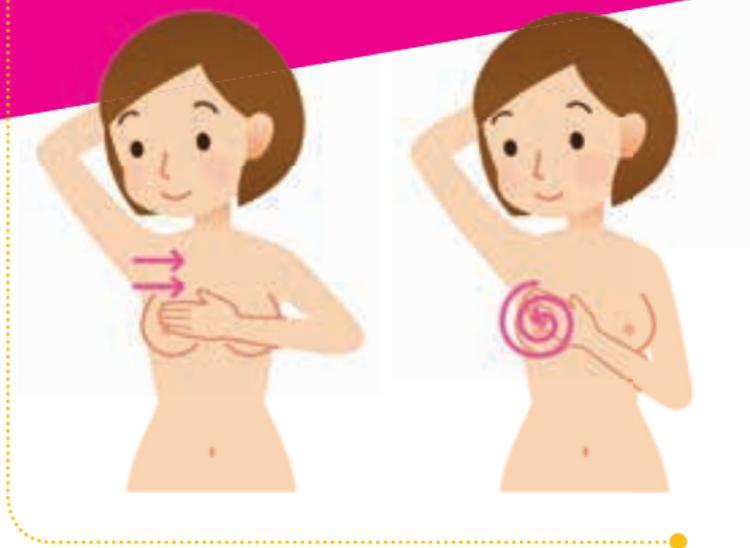
What are the symptoms of breast cancer?

- A change in the size or shape of one breast
- A change in the skin, like puckering, dimpling (like orange peel) or redness
- A change in the nipple shape or direction, like a pulled-in or flattened nipple
- An unusual discharge (liquid) from one or both of your nipples
- A change on or around the nipple, such as a rash or flaky or crusted skin
- Swelling in your armpit or around your collarbone
- A lump, any size, or thickening in your breast
- Constant pain in one part of your breast or armpit
- Any change in how your breast normally looks and feels

These symptoms can be caused by other things, but always get them checked.

How can I check myself?

- 1 Get to know what's normal for you – how your breasts look and feel
- 2 Know what to look out for, like lumps or other changes to the look and feel of your breast or nipple. See the list in this leaflet
- 3 Look for changes in the mirror and feel for changes, too. When you are in the shower, when putting on moisturiser or when lying down
- 4 Check all parts of your breast, your armpits and up to your collar bone
- 5 Discuss any changes with your family doctor – without delay



Can I be screened for breast cancer?

Testing for cancer when you have no symptoms is called screening.

BreastCheck is the national breast screening programme. All women aged 50 to 69 are invited to have a free mammogram (breast X-ray) every 2 years.

For more information see www.breastcheck.ie

What should I do if I have any symptoms?

If you have any symptoms or changes in your body that you are worried about, it's important to have them checked by your GP (family doctor). The chances are it will not be cancer. Getting your symptoms checked is not wasting anyone's time. The sooner cancer is spotted, the more likely you are to recover.

How is breast cancer diagnosed?

If your doctor thinks your symptoms need to be looked at, you will have more tests. Tests that can help to diagnose breast cancer include:



Mammogram

An X-ray of your breasts.



Ultrasound scan

A scan to see if there are lumps in your breast.



Biopsy

A specialist takes tissue samples from your breast and examines them under a microscope.



If you are diagnosed with breast cancer, you can find more information in our booklet.

How can I reduce my risk of breast cancer?



Be a healthy weight: Being a healthy weight is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cancer. This is because fat cells in your body make hormones. High levels of certain hormones increase your cancer risk.



Be active: Women who are physically active have a lower risk of breast cancer than less active women. Try to do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on 5 or more days a week.



Limit alcohol: Drinking alcohol increases your risk of breast cancer. The more you cut down on alcohol, the more you can reduce your risk of breast cancer.



Don't smoke: Some recent research suggests that smoking may specifically increase the risk of breast cancer. Smoking causes 30 per cent of all cancers.



Breastfeed your baby: Breastfeeding helps to protect mothers from breast cancer. The longer a woman breastfeeds her baby, the more she reduces her breast cancer risk.



Check your breasts regularly: You are more likely to survive cancer if you spot it at an early stage. Learn what feels normal for you and check your breasts every month. Talk to your doctor if you notice anything unusual.

See the end of this leaflet for tips on how to reduce your risk of cancer in general.

12 ways to reduce your cancer risk



Do not smoke



Avoid second-hand smoke



Be a healthy weight



Be physically active in everyday life



Have a healthy diet



Avoid alcohol



Avoid too much sun



Avoid pollutants



Get screened for cancer



Breastfeed your baby. Limit HRT



Get vaccinations - Hepatitis B for babies/HPV for girls



Find out if you are exposed to radon gas in your area

Some facts about breast cancer

1/10

1 in 10 women in Ireland will get breast cancer at some point in their lives



Better treatments mean that more women are being cured or living with breast cancer



Men can also get breast cancer, but it is very rare

50+

Breast cancer is most common in women over 50



How common is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women in Ireland, after skin cancer. Around 3,000 women and 30 men are diagnosed with it each year.

More information

If you are worried or have questions about breast cancer or any cancer:



Call our Cancer Nurseline
Freephone 1800 200 700



Email cancernurseline@irishcancer.ie
We will provide you with confidential advice, support and information.

Visit our Daffodil Centres, where our nurses can give you advice about healthy lifestyles and how you can reduce your risk of cancer. To find out where your local Daffodil Centre is, email daffodilcentreinfo@irishcancer.ie

Visit our website www.cancer.ie for more information on breast cancer and ways you can reduce your risk of cancer.

Want to stop smoking?

Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do to reduce your risk of cancer.

If you would like advice or support on quitting, call the HSE Quit Team on CallSave **1800 201 203**, Freetext **QUIT** to **50100** or visit www.quit.ie