



Finding breast cancer early through screening

Cancer can sometimes feel random, as though it affects people by chance. But in truth, there are risk factors that contribute to a person's likelihood of developing cancer – and breast cancer is no exception.

According to the American Cancer Society, more than 1.7 million new cases of cancer will be diagnosed this year, and many of those will affect women. In fact, women are 100 times more likely to develop breast cancer than men.

Knowing the risks

While the exact cause of breast cancer is not fully understood, there are an assortment of risk factors that have been shown to increase risk. These include:

- **Age:** A person's risk for breast cancer increases as they get older, especially after age 55.
- **Inherited genes:** Up to 10 percent of all breast cancer is thought to be due to an inherited genetic change.
- **Race and ethnicity:** The risk of developing breast cancer is slightly greater for Caucasian women overall, as well as for African American women under the age of 45.
- **Age of first menstruation:** If a woman had her first period before she was age 12, she is at slightly higher risk of developing breast cancer.
- **Age of menopause:** Going through menopause after age 55 puts a woman at slightly increased risk.
- **Breast density:** Breast composition varies, and certain characteristics inside the breast tissue can increase risk.

Decreasing risk

Though it is not possible to predict or prevent breast cancer with certainty, there are opportunities for each person to decrease their risk, and many of these opportunities involve simple lifestyle changes.

- **Maintaining a healthy weight:** Balancing food intake with physical activity is a great way to start impacting breast cancer risk. Striving for a balanced diet full of fruits, vegetables and whole grains can help people avoid weight gain as adults, which reduces their overall risk.
- **Being physically active:** It's important to meet the recommended physical activity guidelines, which call for 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity exercise every week.
- **Avoiding alcohol:** It's a best practice to limit alcohol intake to one drink or less per day. To be more specific, one drink is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.

Getting screened

Annual mammograms are recommended for women, even those with minimal risk factors, beginning at age 40. A mammogram is the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is most treatable. Not only does early diagnosis improve health outcomes, it also decreases the overall treatment expenses and prevents any cancer from becoming more complicated to treat.

As a Sanford Health Plan member, you are eligible to receive your annual mammogram as a preventive benefit, which is covered at little to no cost. Visit sanfordhealthplan.com/wellness or your [mySanfordHealthPlan account](#) for a full list of covered preventive benefits.

Schedule a mammogram with your provider today. If you need help finding a provider or for more information about breast cancer screening, call customer service at (800) 752-5863.



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While it seems unfair that your gender can increase your cancer risk, women are 100 times more likely to develop breast cancer than men. In fact, breast cancer makes up 30 percent of all cancers affecting women. But there are many ways you can decrease your risk, including by getting regular screenings.

A number of risk factors contribute to your likelihood of developing breast cancer. These include:

- Being a woman
- Getting older
- Inherited genes
- Race and ethnicity

However, there are many ways you can adjust your lifestyle to help decrease your risk for developing breast cancer, such as:

- Being physically active
- Limiting alcohol consumption
- Maintaining a healthy weight

The best way to help protect yourself and your breast health is to get an annual screening mammogram. Annual mammograms are recommended for all women beginning at age 40.

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Breast cancer prevention. Get screened.

Regular screening is an important part of protecting your breast health. Mammograms remain the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is most treatable. Early detection improves outcomes, decreases expenses and prevents the cancer from becoming more complicated to treat. Annual mammograms are recommended for all women beginning at age 40.

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