

Male Breast Cancer

While most common in women, breast cancer also affects men. Because men have breast tissue, the cells of the breast can form into a group of cancer cells, or a malignant tumor. Males are less likely to develop breast cancer than females because hormones released by the testicles prevent breast tissue from growing. Cancer cells in the breast can spread to the lymph nodes via the lymphatic vessels and become increasingly dangerous. Infiltrating ductal carcinoma is the most common form of breast cancer found in men.

Statistics

- In 2010, there were an estimated 1,970 new cases of invasive male breast cancer, and an estimated 390 men died of the disease in the United States.
- In Texas, an estimated 107 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2011 and an estimated 28 males will die of the disease.
- Breast cancer is 100 times more common in women than men.
- About one in 1,000 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer in his lifetime.
- The outlook for survival from breast cancer in men and women is about the same. Recent studies have overturned the previous conviction that the outlook was worse for men.
- One in five men who are diagnosed with breast cancer has a family member who also has breast cancer.
- Men with a mutation of the BRCA2 gene have a lifetime breast cancer risk of 5 to 10 percent. Of all male breast cancer cases, 10 percent are due to BRCA2 mutations.

Risk Factors

- **Age:** As men age, their risk of developing breast cancer increases, with most male breast cancers detected between 60 and 70 years old.
- **Radiation:** Men who have been treated with radiation around the chest area have an increased risk of breast cancer.
- **Family History:** Men with immediate family members who have breast cancer or who have a mutation of the BRCA2 gene face an increased risk. Men should consider genetic testing to determine if they have the gene mutation, which could impact their risk both as a patient and carrier.
- **Estrogen:** Males with higher levels of estrogen due to diseases, such as the genetic disorder Klinefelter syndrome, have an increased risk. Also, men taking estrogen-related drugs for hormone therapy or sex changes have increased risk.
- **Alcohol:** Men who are heavy drinkers face an increased risk because alcohol abuse causes liver diseases, like cirrhosis, which can lead to higher estrogen levels.
- **Obesity:** Just like with women, obesity can contribute to breast cancer in men. Obese men have higher levels of estrogen because male hormones known as androgens convert to estrogen.

Symptoms

As with women, early detection of breast cancer is crucial to treatment and survival. Men with a family history, such as immediately family members with breast cancer or a BRCA2 mutation, should be screened. Signs to look for include:

- Redness on the skin and around the nipple
- A lump or swelling in the chest area, typically without pain
- A nipple that turns inward
- Skin puckering
- Fluid discharged from the nipple

Treatment Options

Treating breast cancer in men is similar to treating women with the disease. Treatment options can include surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, or hormone therapy. A combination of treatments may be used to provide the best chance of disease control.

Sources: American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute, and Texas Cancer Registry



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