



PLATINUM
HEALTH

Breast Cancer awareness is for men, too

Although breast cancer is typically synonymous as a disease that commonly occurs in women, it does occur in men as well. This is because although minimal in quantity, men do have breast tissue that has the potential to become malignant similarly to women, albeit much less commonly.

A breast cancer diagnosis can be difficult to comprehend and come to terms with. It is often perceived as a women's disease and much of the information and support available is aimed at women. It can be an incredibly confusing and isolating time. You may feel self-conscious about discussing your diagnosis with others and it may be that you don't know anyone else who has gone through a similar experience.

Unfortunately, men with breast cancer are often diagnosed late and have high mortality. However, stage for stage, the survival between males and females is similar.



Which Men Are More Likely to Get Breast Cancer?

It's rare for a man under age 35 to get breast cancer. Your chance of getting breast cancer goes up with age. It usually happens in men older than 60 years of age.

Other things that raise the odds for male breast cancer include:

- Breast cancer in a close female relative.
- History of radiation exposure of the chest.
- Enlarged breasts (gynecomastia) because of drug or hormone treatments, some infections, or poisons.
- Taking estrogen (hormone) supplements.
- A rare genetic condition called Klinefelter's syndrome.
- Severe liver disease, called cirrhosis.
- Diseases of the testicles such as mumps orchitis, a testicular injury, or an undescended testicle.
- Obesity

Symptoms of male breast cancer

Symptoms of breast cancer in men may include:

- A lump or swelling in the chest area or armpit.
- Discharge from the nipple, which may be blood stained.
- An inverted nipple.
- Ulcers or sores on the chest or around the nipple.
- The nipple or surrounding skin becoming hard, red or swollen.
- A rash on or around the nipple.
- Changed in the shape or size of the breast.
- Small bumps in the armpit (swollen glands)



Diagnosing male breast cancer

Tests and procedures to diagnose male breast cancer might include:

Clinical breast exam

During this exam, a health care professional feels the breasts and surrounding areas for lumps or other changes. This exam helps the health professional understand how large the lumps are, how they feel, and how close they are to skin and muscles.

Imaging tests

Imaging tests can create pictures of breast tissue to look for signs of cancer. Tests may include a breast X-ray, called a mammogram, an ultrasound or an MRI scan.

Removing a sample of breast cells for testing, called a biopsy

To determine whether you have cancer, you might have a procedure to remove a sample of cells for testing in a lab. This procedure is called a biopsy. To get the sample, a health care professional puts a needle through the skin on your chest. The health professional guides the needle using a mammogram or another imaging test.

In the lab, specialists examine the cells under a microscope to see if they're cancer. Other tests can tell whether your cancer cells have hormone receptors or certain DNA changes. The test results help your health care team create a treatment plan. There might be other tests and procedures depending on your situation.



Treatment of male breast cancer

Treatment will be the same as for female breast cancer. Your healthcare team will explain the options and the most appropriate treatment will be chosen depending on the nature of the cancer. Typical treatment can include any of the following:

- Surgery
- Chemotherapy
- Radiotherapy
- Hormone therapy
- Targeted drug therapy

Remember, like anyone who has breast cancer or who has recovered from it, you'll need to have regular checkups with your doctor for the rest of your life. Getting regular medical care is key to staying healthy.

Sources:

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