

Breast Cancer and Mammography Myths & Facts

Myth:	Facts:
I don't have to worry about getting breast cancer. I don't have any of the risk factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just being a woman and getting older are the greatest risk factors for breast cancer. • Additional risk factors include: family history, early menarche, late menopause, late age at first pregnancy or no pregnancies, diet and alcohol consumption. • Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers in women. • About 70% of women with breast cancer have no known risk factors. • In 2004 about 215,990 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and approximately 40,110 women will die from breast cancer.
Now that I am in my fifties, I no longer have to worry about getting breast cancer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women don't outgrow the risk of breast cancer. As women get older, their risk of getting breast cancer actually increases. • More than 75% of breast cancers are found in women aged 50 and older.
No one in my family has been diagnosed with breast cancer, so I won't get it either.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About 90% of the women who develop breast cancer have no family history of the disease. • Having one first-degree relative with breast cancer approximately doubles a woman's risk.
If I get breast cancer, I'll die from it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mammogram can find breast cancer in its earliest stages, before it can be felt. • Ninety-seven out of 100 women will live for five years or more if their breast cancer is found at its earliest stage.
I can't afford to have a mammogram.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have Medicare and are a woman aged 40 and older, Medicare will help pay for you to have a mammogram once every 12 months. The woman does not have to meet a deductible first. • Most insurance companies help pay for mammograms. • If a woman doesn't have health insurance, often the American Cancer Society can help recommend resources. Call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.
Mammograms are unsafe and too painful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mammograms give only minimal exposure to radiation. • Some pressure on the breasts is needed during the mammogram in order to get a clear x-ray, but it only lasts a few minutes. • A woman can tell the mammography technician to decrease the pressure if it becomes too uncomfortable.
I've had one mammogram; that's all I need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast cancer can occur at any time. That is why it is so important to get regular mammograms – not just one. • The American College of Radiology, the American Medical Association and the American Cancer Society recommend that women aged 40 and older have a mammogram every year. • When a woman has annual mammograms, her doctor can compare the x-rays from year to year. This makes it easier to find changes in the breasts and detect breast cancer in its earliest stages.
All women have an equal risk of getting breast cancer and dying from it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are differences in rates of detection and survival outcomes between women of different races. • Although Caucasian women have a higher incidence of getting breast cancer, African American women with breast cancer are more likely to die from it. • Cancer is the leading cause of death for African American women aged 30-54. • African American women are 30% more likely to die of breast cancer than white women.”