What is a family health history?
A family health history is a portrait of the shared lives and health of your extended family.

Screening recommendations

... for individuals WITH A FAMILY HISTORY of breast cancer

Women with a hereditary breast or ovarian cancer syndrome:

- Monthly breast self-exams and a yearly clinical breast exam (CBE) starting at age 18
- A CBE every 6-12 months and yearly mammograms and MRI starting at age 25 or individualized screening based on the earliest case in the family

Men with a hereditary breast or ovarian cancer syndrome:

- Monthly breast self-exams and a CBE every 6-12 months
- Some men need screening by mammography. Talk to your health care provider to determine if you need to have this test
- Follow population screening guidelines for prostate cancer

Women with a family history of breast cancer:

- Monthly breast self-exams and a yearly CBE starting at age 18
- A CBE every 6-12 months and yearly mammograms 5-10 years before the youngest breast cancer case in the family

... for individuals WITH NO KNOWN FAMILY HISTORY of breast cancer

- A clinical breast exam (CBE) by your health care team every 1-3 years for women 20-39 years of age
- A yearly mammogram and CBE by your health care provider for women 40 years of age and older
Breast cancer risk factors and what you can do about them

Things you can change

- **Obesity:** Greater weight leads to greater risk
- **Diet:** A diet high in fat increases risk
- **Exercise:** An inactive lifestyle increases risk
- **Alcohol:** Drinking too much increases risk
- **Hormone therapy:** Hormone replacement therapy increases risk

Things you can’t change

- **Family history:** Breast cancer risk is higher among women whose close blood relatives have/had this disease. *Both your mother’s and your father’s family health history matters!*
- **Age:** Most breast cancers happen after age 50
- **Ethnicity:** Whites and Ashkenazi Jews are at greater risk
- **Menstrual history:** Earlier menstruation (before age 12) and later menopause (after age 50) increase risk
- **Reproductive history:** Women who had their first child after age 30 or have had no children are at greater risk
- **Breast density:** Increases risk
- **Hormonal factors:** Female hormones increase risk
- **Personal history of benign breast disease:** Increases risk

What can you do if you have a family history of breast cancer?

- Lose weight if you are overweight
- Eat a balanced diet including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats
- Be active
- Drink less alcohol
- Talk to your health care provider about your family health history of cancer
- Get earlier and more frequent screening with mammography and clinical breast exam by your health care provider
- Get screened regularly
- Talk to a genetic counselor for cancer risk assessment, genetic counseling and genetic testing
- Undergo preventive surgery (removal of both breasts and ovaries) in some cases
- Take prescription drugs to prevent cancer

Sources

- National Cancer Institute, www.cancer.gov

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