

## Breast cancer information everyone should know

*Signs and symptoms, risk factors and screening information for the most common cancer in women worldwide, from a cancer nurse specialist*

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### Key takeaways:

- Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women and also the most common cancer globally
- Most breast cancers occur in women over 50 but younger women can get breast cancer, too. Men can also get breast cancer, although this is rare.
- There are some lifestyle factors associated with an increased risk of breast cancer, such as drinking alcohol
- It's important to attend routine breast screening if and when invited. This is usually done by mammogram.

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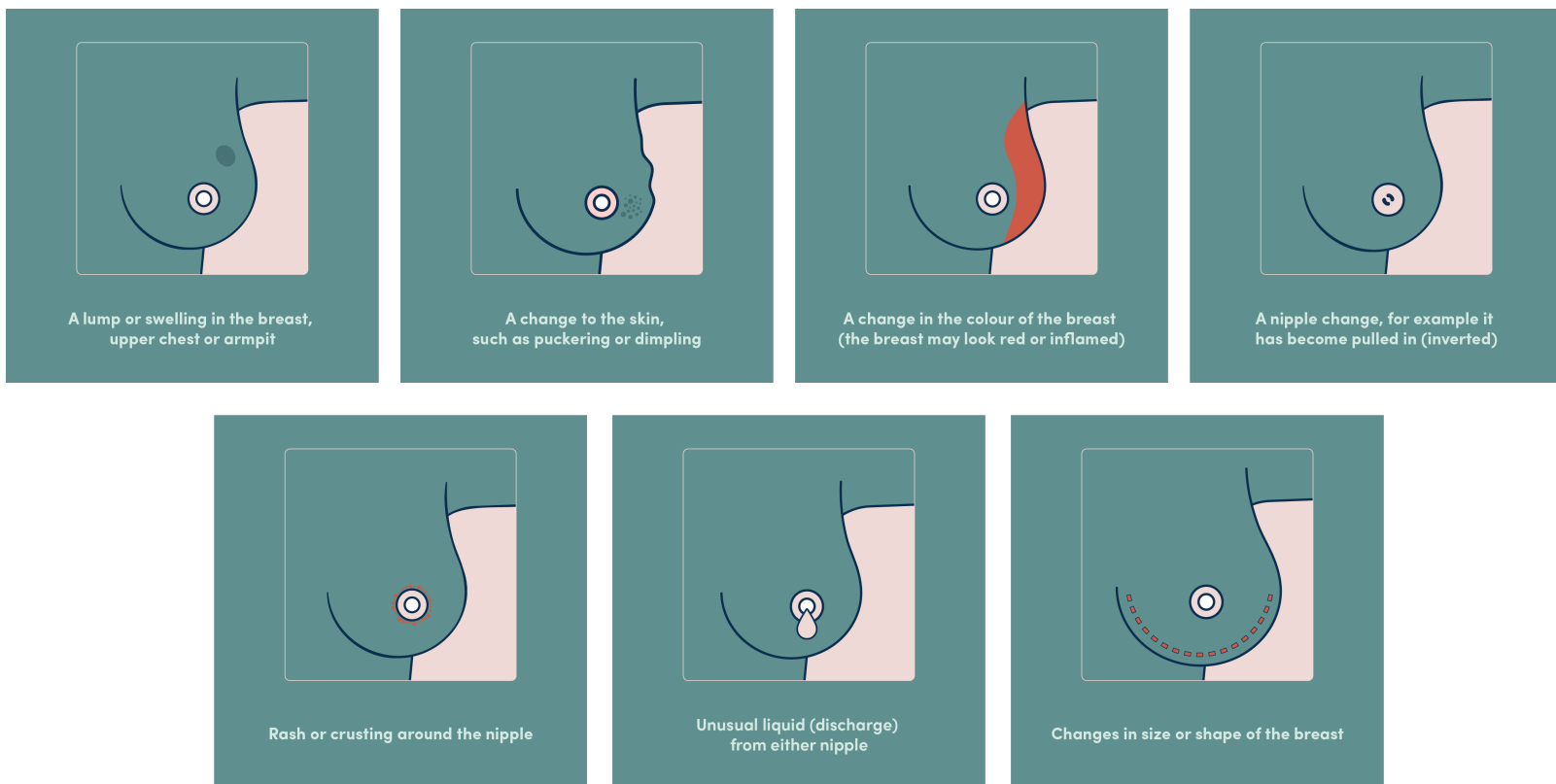
Breast cancer is cancer that starts in the breast tissue. It is the most common cancer in women and also the most common cancer globally.

The good news is that breast cancer survival has doubled in the last 50 years. The earlier breast cancer is diagnosed, the better the chance of successful treatment, so it's important to be breast aware, to see your healthcare provider if you notice a change and to take part in a breast cancer screening programme if it is offered and you are eligible.

## What are the symptoms of breast cancer?

It's important to see your healthcare provider about any breast changes that are new for you, even though, for most women, these will not be cancer:

- A lump or swelling in the breast, upper chest or armpit
- A change to the skin, such as puckering or dimpling
- A change in the colour of the breast (the breast may look red or inflamed)
- A nipple change, for example it has become pulled in (inverted)
- Rash or crusting around the nipple
- Unusual liquid (discharge) from either nipple
- Changes in size or shape of the breast



## How to check your chest

Everyone should check their chest regularly and it's important to know what is normal for you:

- **Touch** your breasts/chest: can you feel anything new or unusual?
- **Look** for changes: does anything look different to you?
- **Check** all the way up to your collarbone (upper chest) and armpits

- **Check** any new or unusual changes with your healthcare provider

Remember, if you have had top surgery or risk reducing surgery you still need to check as there continues to be a small risk of developing breast cancer.

### **Who is at risk of developing breast cancer?**

Most breast cancers (80%) occur in women over the age of 50, but younger women can be affected too. Men can also get breast cancer, but this is rare. Research suggests that transgender women undergoing hormone treatment may be at increased risk of breast cancer compared to cisgender men.

Most breast cancers are not inherited; only a small number of people have an increased risk of developing breast cancer because they have a significant family history. If you are worried about your family history of breast cancer and want to know more, you can talk to your healthcare provider.

### **Can you reduce your risk of breast cancer?**

The main risk factors for breast cancer – being a woman, getting older and having a family history – can't be changed, however, there are some things that you may be able to control that can increase your risk. Limiting the amount of alcohol you drink can reduce your risk of breast cancer, as can maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active for around 20 minutes a day and breastfeeding if you have a baby.

### **What is the role of breast cancer screening?**

The majority of developed countries offer routine breast cancer screening, and it's important to attend screening appointments when invited. Breast screening uses a breast X-ray called a mammogram to look for cancers when they're too small to see or feel. Remaining breast aware in between screening mammograms will help you to notice any changes and report them to your healthcare provider as soon as you can.

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