



### **About breast cancer**

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in England, with around 44,300 women diagnosed each year. The older you are, the more likely you are to get it – one in three women who get breast cancer are aged 70 or over.

**If breast cancer is detected early, it is more treatable.  
Finding it early could save your life.**

### **Breast screening**

Breast screening uses X-rays to look at the breasts (mammography). Women between the ages of 50 and 70 are currently invited for free screening every three years. Screening can detect breast cancer at an earlier stage. In some parts of England, some women aged 47-49 and 71-73 are being invited for screening as part of a major research trial.

If you're over 70, you can ask for a free screening every three years. Just get in touch with your local breast screening unit to make an appointment (find your local unit on the NHS website at [nhs.uk/breastscreening](https://www.nhs.uk/breastscreening)).

*Whatever your age, and even if you attend screening, it's important to remain breast aware.* If you find anything unusual or notice a possible symptom, don't wait for your screening appointment – see your doctor right away to be on the safe side.

### **Breast cancer screening announcement**

Some women aged between 70 and 79 who did not receive an invitation for a final screening are being offered one now.

[Find out if this affects you](#)

**[Please look at the 2<sup>nd</sup> page for symptoms:](#)**

## **Breast cancer symptoms**

The first symptom of breast cancer most people notice is a lump in their breast or some thickening.

### **Breast symptoms to look out for:**

- a new lump or thickening in your breast or armpit
- change in size, shape or feel of your breast
- skin changes in the breast such as puckering, dimpling, a rash or redness of the skin
- fluid leaking from the nipple in a woman who isn't pregnant or breast feeding
- changes in the position of nipple
- breast pain

These symptoms listed here are more often caused by other medical conditions. But if you have any of them it is important to see your doctor.

### **Breast lump**

The first symptom of breast cancer for many women is a lump in their breast. Most breast lumps are not cancer (benign).

Most benign breast lumps are:

- areas of normal lumpiness that is more obvious just before a period
- cysts – sacs of fluid in the breast tissue, which are quite common
- fibroadenoma – a collection of fibrous glandular tissue (these are common in younger women, for example under 30)

It is important to always get a breast lump checked by your doctor. They will arrange for you to have tests to find out whether your lump is cancerous or not.

### **A lump or swelling in your armpit**

You can't usually feel the lymph glands in your body. But they often become swollen when you have an infection or a cold, including the lymph nodes in the armpit.

A less common cause of swollen lymph glands or lump in the armpit is breast cancer that has spread to this area.

### **Change in size, shape or feel of your breast**

A cancer might cause your breast to look bigger or have a different shape than usual, it might feel different.

Many healthy women find that their breasts feel lumpy and tender just before their period.

It can help to be breast aware. This means getting to know the size, shape and feel of your breasts.

- [You can find out about being breast aware on our finding breast cancer early page](#)

### **Skin changes**

Skin changes include puckering, dimpling, a rash, or redness of the skin of the breast. Some people have a rash or redness of the nipple and the surrounding skin.

The skin might look like orange peel or the texture might feel different. This can be caused by other breast conditions. But get your doctor to check out anything that is not normal for you.

### **Fluid leaking from your nipple**

Fluid leaking from a nipple in a woman who isn't pregnant or breastfeeding can be a sign of cancer. But other medical conditions can also cause this.

### **Change in the position of your nipple**

One nipple might turn in or sink into the breast. It might look or feel different to usual.

Do see your doctor if you notice anything different or unusual with one or both nipples.

### **Breast pain**

Breast pain is very common and it's not normally due to cancer. You might get pain in one or both breasts for a while, which goes after a time. There might be no obvious reason for this pain, even if you have a lot of tests.

Do see your doctor if you have breast pain. They can give you advice on how to treat the pain and whether you need any tests.

### **Seeing your doctor**

Your symptoms may not be due to breast cancer, and they may not make you feel unwell. But it is important that any symptoms you have are checked by a doctor, even if you are feeling well.

The earlier a cancer is picked up, the easier it is to treat it and the more likely the treatment is to be successful.

## Reduce your risk

A healthy lifestyle can help reduce your risk of breast cancer:

- maintain a healthy weight – keeping a healthy body weight is a great way to help reduce your risk of cancer
- look after yourself – keep fit and stay active. Swimming, exercise classes, dancing or even brisk walking – no matter what type of exercise, the more you can do, the better
- cut down on alcohol – drinking too much can lead to a number of health problems. By drinking less, you'll reduce your health risks

For more information on how to reduce your risk of cancer, visit [nhs.uk/reduce-your-risk](https://www.nhs.uk/reduce-your-risk).

**1 in 3 women  
who get breast  
cancer are over 70,  
so don't assume  
you're past it.**

**BE CLEAR  
ON CANCER**