

# Breast cancer risk assessment: near population risk

**This leaflet is for women with near population risk of breast cancer (following a family history risk assessment).**

It gives information on how common breast cancer is, screening and how the risk of breast cancer can be altered. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor, genetic counsellor or nurse caring for you.

## Contact details

Clinic telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Seen in clinic by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of risk assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

## What is near population risk of breast cancer?

Near population risk of breast cancer means that your risk of developing breast cancer is estimated to be the same as other women in the general population.

Breast cancer is a common disease. In the general population about one in eight women in the UK will develop breast cancer.

**Breast cancer affects 1 in 8 women**



Although breast cancer is common, having an inherited tendency to developing breast cancer is quite rare. Only about 5-10% of all breast cancers happen because of an inherited tendency (also called a genetic predisposition).

Women with near population risk of developing breast cancer are unlikely to have an inherited tendency to develop breast cancer.

## Do women with a near population risk of breast cancer need screening?

Yes. Screening for women with a family history of breast cancer is based on nationally recommended guidelines – these can be found on the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence website at **[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)**.

You will be offered a mammogram every three years from 50 to 70 years of age as part of the National Breast Screening Programme. This programme is being extended to invite women in their late 40s and up to 73 years. Women over 70 can request that breast screening continues every three years if they wish. A separate leaflet is available which explains this. You do not need a mammogram more often because:

- breast cancer is easier to see on a mammogram after the menopause
- if breast cancer does occur, it is likely to grow more slowly in women aged 50 or over
- breast tissue in young women can be too 'dense' (tightly packed) for a mammogram to be helpful when there is no increased risk of breast cancer.

All women are encouraged to be breast aware. Contact your GP if you notice any changes in your breasts. Please do not wait until your next mammogram.

## Can anything alter breast cancer risk?

Yes – the following can alter the risk:

- the oral contraceptive pill and Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) slightly increase the risk of breast cancer while a woman is taking it and for up to five years after it is stopped
- alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer
- pregnancy and breast-feeding lower the risk of breast cancer

- being overweight increases the risk of breast cancer for women after the menopause
- regular exercise lowers the risk of breast cancer
- eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and lowering cholesterol intake helps lower the risk of cancer
- if anyone else in your family develops cancer, particularly breast or ovarian cancer, then this could alter your risk – if this happens please ask for a reassessment of your risk.

## Useful contacts

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS.

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy's e: [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

### Breast Cancer Care

t: 0808 800 6000 [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)

### Macmillan Cancer Support

t: 0808 808 0000 [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

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