

# American Cancer Society Guidelines for the Early Detection of Breast Cancer

- Yearly mammograms starting at age 40 and continuing for as long as a woman is in good health
- Clinical breast exam (CBE) about every 3 years for women in their 20s and 30s and every year for women 40 and over
- Women should know how their breasts normally look and feel and report any breast changes to a health care provider right away. Breast self-exam (BSE) is an option for women starting in their 20s.

Some women – because of their family history, a genetic tendency, or certain other factors – should be screened with MRIs along with mammograms. (The number of women who fall into this category is small: less than 2% of all women in the United States.) Talk with a doctor about your history and whether you should have other tests or start testing at an earlier age.

## What Are the Symptoms of Breast Cancer?

In its early stages, breast cancer usually has no symptoms. As a tumor develops, you may note the following signs:

- A lump in the breast or underarm that persists after your menstrual cycle. This is often the first apparent symptom of breast cancer. Lumps associated with breast cancer are usually painless, although some may cause a prickly sensation. Lumps are usually visible on a mammogram long before they can be seen or felt.
- Swelling in the armpit.
- Pain or tenderness in the breast. Although lumps are usually painless, pain or tenderness can be a sign of breast cancer.
- A noticeable flattening or indentation on the breast, which may indicate a tumor that cannot be seen or felt.
- Any change in the size, contour, texture, or temperature of the breast. A reddish, pitted surface like the skin of an orange could be a sign of advanced breast cancer.
- A change in the nipple, such as a nipple retraction, dimpling, itching, a burning sensation, or ulceration. A scaly rash of the nipple is symptomatic of Paget's disease, which may be associated with an underlying breast cancer.
- Unusual discharge from the nipple that may be clear, bloody, or another color. It's usually caused by benign conditions but could be due to cancer in some cases.
- A marble-like area under the skin.
- An area that is distinctly different from any other area on either breast.