

## Do men get breast cancer?

Breast cancer in men is rare, but it does happen. After all, men have breast tissue also. The overall ratio of female to male breast cancer in the U.S. is 100 to 1.<sup>1</sup> Although it sounds like a small number, that is still roughly 1,690 men who will be diagnosed, and about 460 who will die of the disease in 2005.<sup>2</sup>

The most common symptoms of male breast cancer include a lump in the chest area, skin dimpling or puckering, or nipple changes. Because breast cancer is so much more common in females, many men do not even realize they can develop this disease. Unfortunately, this can delay diagnosis and as a result, some cancers are not found until they have progressed to a later stage. However, when cancer is found at the same stage among men and women, the



survival rates are similar. Because the male breast is much smaller than the female breast, it is more likely the disease will spread to the chest wall. For this reason, it is important to find the cancer early in order to successfully treat it.

<sup>1</sup>Harris (Ed) Diseases of the Breast 3rd ed. Male Breast Cancer by Gradishar, William, 2004 (Lippencott).

<sup>2</sup>American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts & Figures 2005

## A man's risk

Several factors may increase a man's risk of getting breast cancer. Some of these have been strongly linked with breast cancer in men, others have a weaker link to breast cancer, and the specific role of others is still under research.

### Known factors that increase your risk of breast cancer include:

- getting older
- having family members (male or female) with breast cancer, especially with a BRCA2 mutation
- having your chest area exposed to radiation treatment, usually for cancer treatment such as Hodgkin's disease
- chronic liver disorders
- having a genetic condition such as Klinefelter's syndrome



## How do I know if I have breast cancer?

The steps used to diagnose breast cancer in men are the same steps used for women. These steps include a complete medical history, clinical breast exam, mammograms and biopsy.

The types of breast cancer found in men are similar to those found in women, as are the staging system and patterns of how the disease spreads. Thus, treatments for breast cancer in men are similar to

treatments for breast cancer in women. A mastectomy is a surgical procedure to remove the breast with the cancerous tumor. It is generally the treatment of choice for male breast cancer. Chemotherapy, radiation and hormone therapies are also used following surgery. See your doctor if you have any persistent lumps or changes in your chest area. For more information, please refer to the fact sheets on *breast cancer detection* and *breast surgery*.

### Asking the right questions

When first diagnosed with breast cancer, many men are in disbelief. After all, breast cancer is a women's disease, right? Not always. Do not let the surprise of this diagnosis distract you from the seriousness of this disease. It is very important for you to ask questions and gather as much information as you can in order to make decisions about your treatment. Here are some questions to ask your doctor:

1. What type of breast cancer do I have? Is it *in situ* [in SY-too] (cancer is localized and has not spread to nearby tissue) or *invasive* (cancer has spread to surrounding breast tissue)?
2. What is the stage of my cancer?
3. What treatments are appropriate for my type of cancer? Which one do you recommend and why?
4. How can I prepare for treatment? What side effects should I expect?
5. What is my prognosis?

### Resources

Although breast cancer is rare among men, information and other resources are available to help men with breast cancer. The organizations listed below will help you get the information and support you need.

**The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation** — fights to eradicate breast cancer by advancing research, education, screening and treatment.  
1.800 I'M AWARE®  
[www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

**American Cancer Society** — has research, education and patient service programs to help cancer patients and their families cope with cancer.  
1.800.ACS.2345  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization** — has trained volunteers, all of whom are breast cancer survivors.  
1.800.221.2141 (English) or  
1.800.986.9505 (Spanish)  
[www.y-me.org](http://www.y-me.org)

#### Related fact sheets in this series:

- ❖ breast cancer detection
- ❖ treatment choices — an overview
- ❖ breast surgery

*This list of resources is made available solely as a suggested resource. Please note that it is not a complete listing of materials or information available on breast health and breast cancer. This information is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional. Further, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation does not endorse, recommend or make any warranties or representations regarding the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, quality or non-infringement of any of the materials, products or information provided by the organizations referred to in this list.*