

5 tips for healthy breasts

1. Get to know your breasts. Perform monthly self breast exams.
2. Follow a healthy lifestyle, including:
 - * **Watch your weight.** Being overweight or obese increases breast cancer risk. This is especially true after menopause and for women who gain weight as adults. The major source of estrogen for postmenopausal women is not the ovaries, but fat tissue. The increased risk may be due in part to more estrogen being made in fatty tissue. If you're already at a healthy weight, stay there. If you're carrying extra pounds, try to shed some. There is evidence that losing weight may lower breast cancer risk. One easy goal to get started is to try losing 5 to ten percent of your current weight over six months. For most women, that means dropping just half a pound per week.
 - * **Exercise regularly.** Many studies have found that exercise is a breast-healthy habit. As little as 75 to 150 minutes of brisk walking each week has been shown to lower risk. Ramping up your exercise routine even more may lower your breast cancer risk even further. The American Cancer Society recommends getting at least 150 minutes of moderately intense activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity each week. (Or a combination of both.) And don't cram it all into a single workout — spread it out over the week.
 - * **Limit alcohol.** Women who have two or more alcoholic drinks a day have about 1 1/2 times the risk of breast cancer compared to women who don't drink at all. Follow the American Cancer Society's recommendation of no more than one drink per day.
 - * For postmenopausal women, **limit or avoid taking hormones.** Taking hormones such as estrogen and progesterone have long been used for night sweats, hot flashes, and other troublesome symptoms of menopause. But in 2002, researchers found that postmenopausal women who took a combination of estrogen and progestin were more likely to develop breast cancer. Breast cancer risk appears to return to normal within 5 years after stopping the combination of hormones. There are no long-term studies comparing bioidentical hormones to synthetic hormones, and these are not necessarily safer than prescription hormones.

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3. If you are over 40 years old, get a mammogram every year: **Early detection of breast cancer** offers the best chance for survival.
4. **Know your breast density.** Dense breasts make it harder to detect breast cancers on a mammogram. If you have been told you have dense breasts, talk to your doctor about additional options for screening.
5. **Know your risk.** Tell your doctor if you have family members who have had breast cancer, especially a mother or sister, and if they had breast cancer before reaching menopause, because your own risk of cancer may be higher than average. Some women at high risk may be recommended for an annual MRI in addition to a screening mammogram.

