

Reduce **your risk** of breast cancer

A GUIDE



**Breast
Cancer** 
Prevent the preventable



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are preventable.**

Reduce **your risk** of breast cancer

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the UK – **one in seven** women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. But the good news is, over a quarter of breast cancer cases are preventable. Studies suggest that if you take precautionary measures to adopt a healthier lifestyle your risk of developing breast cancer could be significantly reduced.



Why do people get breast cancer?

There are lots of reasons why, though there is still much we don't know. Many factors are important, including genetic make-up, age, gender, lifestyle, diet and environment.

How can I reduce my risk?

There are some things you can't directly control, your genetic make-up and your age for example. Other stuff you can do something about. This leaflet gives you some basic steps towards reducing your risk of developing breast cancer.

Why do I need to take action now?

Though women of any age can benefit from taking steps to reduce their risk, the younger you are when you start the better. Because as you grow older your risk of developing the disease increases.

Is it hard to make a real difference?

It may be easier than you think. No one's expecting you to be squeaky clean all the time. The trick is to size-up your general risk and then think about how you can make the most impact. You may be surprised at the other perks that come with changing aspects of your life.



Reduce your risk of breast cancer

Making simple changes to your diet or lifestyle is an obvious way to help reduce your risk of breast cancer. But avoiding products containing certain hormone disrupting chemicals (also known as Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals or EDCs) may also help reduce your risk.

Improve your lifestyle



Drink less alcohol

You knew we were going to say it. There is a strong link between alcohol consumption and breast cancer. The more you consume the greater the risk – even one drink a day increases your chance of getting breast cancer. Alcohol increases oestrogen levels in the bloodstream and, when broken down, produces harmful by-products which can accumulate in breast tissue and cause cancers.



Get yourself fit!

We can't do the exercise for you. But here's the lowdown. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week to reduce breast cancer risk. Physical activity not only reduces body fat, but also lowers levels of oestrogen and other hormones in the bloodstream. It also reduces inflammation, enhances the immune system and reduces insulin resistance helping to lower cancer risk.



Eat better, not perfect!

You don't have to eat clean, or stick to a strict diet – just simple, healthy choices most of the time can do the trick. Being overweight is a strong risk factor for breast cancer in post-menopausal women. After menopause, fat cells become the main source of oestrogen, which means a higher risk of getting breast cancer if you are overweight. A healthy diet, high in fruit, vegetables and nuts, organic when possible, will help keep your weight healthy and lower your risk of breast cancer and its recurrence.



Stop disrupting your hormones!

Certain hormone disrupting chemicals (EDCs) can mimic the natural hormone oestrogen which increases the rate of cell division. The more a cell divides the more likely mutations will occur and accumulate, including those associated with breast cancer. These chemicals can be found in anything from cosmetics to cleaning products and sometimes even in the food we eat. For a list of some chemicals to watch out for see our table below.



Cosmetics

Some of the creams and beauty products we use every day may contain hormone disrupting chemicals. Reducing your use of these, or finding ones that are free from certain chemicals, can help to reduce levels of these compounds in the body.



Household products

Cleaners, fire resistant textiles, pesticides, and plastics (including plastic toys) may also contain hormone disrupting chemicals.



HRT and the pill

Like natural oestrogen, exposure to high concentrations of synthetic oestrogen and other hormones found in HRT and the pill, especially long-term, increases your risk of breast cancer. Sometimes nothing else will do, but discuss available alternatives with your doctor.



Protect your baby

Protect the health of your unborn child, especially in early pregnancy, by avoiding alcohol, eating a healthy diet, and trying to avoid exposures to EDCs. Early exposures to these chemicals may lead to an increased risk of breast cancer for your child later in life.

And did you know...



Starting a family earlier

The younger you start having children (especially if you're under thirty) and the more children you have, the lower your risk of breast cancer.



Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding can significantly reduce your risk of developing breast cancer. It's not always possible to breastfeed but even a short spell of breastfeeding is beneficial and the longer you do it, the better.



Night light exposure

If you work nights or are exposed to light at night, your risk of breast cancer may go up. This may be because the body produces lower levels of the hormone melatonin, which is released at night in response to darkness. It regulates your internal body clock and helps protect you against breast and some other cancers.



Smoking

Links between smoking and lung cancer are well documented but if you started young or have been smoking a long time you could be more likely to get breast cancer.



Male breast cancer

Although male breast cancer accounts for less than 1% of breast cancer cases in the UK, if you're a man you're not immune, and many of the factors which increase the risk of female breast cancer also apply to you.

breastcanceruk.org.uk

Chemicals to watch out for

Here's a quick checklist of some chemicals to avoid. For more detailed information about why these are harmful, and how you can avoid them, visit

breastcanceruk.org.uk



Product	Hormone Disrupting Chemical (EDC)
<div>Cosmetics & personal care products</div> <div></div>	<div>Makeup, shampoo, cleansers</div> <div></div> <div>Parabens e.g. ethyl paraben, methyl paraben, propyl paraben, butyl paraben</div>
	<div>Perfume, hair dyes, hair products</div> <div></div> <div>Phthalates e.g. diethyl phthalate (DEP); may be listed as “parfum” or “fragrance”</div>
	<div>Antibacterial soaps, toothpaste, tooth whitening products, deodorants, shaving products, creams</div> <div></div> <div>Triclosan</div>
<div>Household & industrial products</div> <div></div>	<div>PVC plastic, e.g. toys, food containers, carpets, packaging, construction materials, flooring, cables</div> <div></div> <div>Phthalates e.g. diisononyl phthalate (DINP); may be listed as “parfum” or “fragrance”</div>
	<div>Detergents, cleaning cloths, cleaning sprays, toys, carpets, chopping board</div> <div></div> <div>Triclosan</div>
	<div>Water bottles, food contact materials, till receipts, computer casings</div> <div></div> <div>Bisphenols e.g. BPA, BPZ, BPS, BPAF, BPB</div>
	<div>Stain protection for furniture, non-stick cookware, food packaging, floor waxes, cleaners, textiles</div> <div></div> <div>Poly- & perfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) e.g. PFAS or PFOA</div>
<div>Processed food</div> <div></div>	<div>e.g. crisps, sausages, bacon, ready meals</div> <div></div> <div>Parabens (E215, E216, E218, E219)</div>

Disclaimer: This leaflet is for information purposes only and does not cover all breast cancer risks. Nor does it constitute medical advice and should not be used as an alternative to professional care. If you detect a lump or have any concerns, seek advice from your GP. Breast Cancer UK has made every effort to ensure the content of this leaflet is correct at the time of publishing but no warranty is given to that effect nor any liability accepted for any loss or damage arising from its use.



To view this information in a more accessible format or to provide feedback please contact us.

For full references relating to this leaflet, please visit our website.

Who we are

Breast Cancer UK aims to prevent breast cancer through scientific research, collaboration, education and policy change. We raise awareness of the risk factors for breast cancer and provide practical information to help people reduce these risks. We campaign for better breast cancer prevention policies and fund research to increase the understanding of the risk factors for breast cancer. For more details on the science behind our work visit our website.

Support us

Fundraise From cake sales to running marathons, there are so many ways to support us. For ideas and help, head to our website.

Donate You can donate by post, through our website, or by text – to donate £5 please text BCUK001 to 70970.

Leave a legacy in your will Your legacy will help us to prevent breast cancer in future generations.

Companies Whether you'd like to undertake a team building adventure event, a party or a partnership – contact us for support.

Volunteer Endorse one of our campaigns on an issue that could help save vital lives. Or become one of our Ambassadors to help spread our prevention message in the workplace or your community.

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