At least 30% of breast cancer cases are preventable
Reduce your risk of breast cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK – one in seven women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. But the good news is at least 30% of breast cancer cases can be prevented. Studies suggest that if you make small changes to your lifestyle and daily habits, you could significantly reduce your risk of breast cancer.

Why do people get breast cancer?
There are lots of reasons why, though there is still much we don’t know. Many factors influence risk including your genes, age, sex, lifestyle, diet and environment.

How can I reduce my risk?
There are some things you can’t directly control, your genes and your age for example. However, there are certain factors you do have some control over. This leaflet gives you some basic steps towards reducing your risk of developing breast cancer.

Why do I need to take action now?
The sooner you start to reduce your risk, the earlier you could see the benefits. No matter what age you are, it’s never too soon or too late to reduce your risk of breast cancer.

Is it hard to make a real difference?
It may be easier than you think. No one is expecting you to be perfect. The trick is to understand your general risk, and then think about the changes you make that will have the most impact. Scan the QR code below to take our Prevention Quiz and find out what changes you could make.
Reduce your risk of breast cancer

Check out our top tips below to start your prevention journey today!

Improve your lifestyle

Drink less alcohol
It's best not to drink. If you drink, do it in moderation. Do not exceed the UK government guidelines of 4 units per week. There is a strong link between alcohol consumption and breast cancer. The more you drink, the greater your risk – for women, even one drink a day increases your risk. Alcohol increases oestrogen levels in the bloodstream and also, when broken down, produces harmful by-products which can damage DNA and increase the risk of certain cancers including breast cancer.

Move your body
Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week to reduce your breast cancer risk. The more you do, the better. Physical activity not only reduces body fat, but lowers the levels of oestrogen and other hormones in your bloodstream. It also reduces inflammation and boosts your immune system, helping to lower cancer risk.

Eat well, most of the time
You don’t have to stick to a strict diet – just making simple, healthy choices most of the time can do the trick. A healthy diet, which is high in fruit, vegetables and wholegrains, organic when possible, will help keep your weight healthy and lower your risk of breast cancer.

Maintain a healthy weight
Being overweight is a strong risk factor for breast cancer in men and postmenopausal women. Fat cells can convert male hormones into female hormones, a higher amount of fat means the possibility of more female hormones such as oestrogen in circulation. After menopause, fat cells become the main source of oestrogen, which means a higher risk of getting breast cancer if you are overweight.

Stop disrupting your hormones!

Certain chemicals can interfere with our hormones. These are called endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs). They can mimic your natural hormones including oestrogen which can increase the rate of cell division. The more a cell divides, the more likely a mutation associated with breast cancer may occur. These chemicals can be found in anything from cosmetics to cleaning products and sometimes even in our food. For a list of chemicals to watch out for see our table below.

Cosmetics
Some of the creams and other beauty products you use every day may contain EDCs. Products that are free from certain chemicals, can help to reduce levels of these compounds in your body.

Household products
Cleaners, fire resistant textiles (furniture), pesticides, and plastics (children’s toys) may also contain EDCs.

HRT and the contraceptive pill
Some HRT and hormonal contraceptives, containing synthetic oestrogen and other hormones such as progesterone, can be associated with a small increased risk of breast cancer. This increase falls after you stop taking it.

There are some benefits to taking HRT or oral contraception. Deciding to take them is a personal choice that should be made after speaking to your doctor so you can make the right decision for you.

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. We appreciate it’s not always possible for all mothers but if you are able to, 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. 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.

Breast cancer in men
Just under 400 men a year in the UK are diagnosed with breast cancer. 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. For example, being overweight, excessive drinking and exposure to EDCs.

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.

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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 our website

Endocrine Disrupting Chemical (EDC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Endocrine Disrupting Chemical (EDC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Makeup, shampoo, cleansers</td>
<td>Parabens e.g. ethyl paraben, methyl paraben, propyl paraben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfume, hair dyes, hair products</td>
<td>Phthalates e.g. diethyl phthalate (DEP), may be listed as “parfum” or “fragrance”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suncream, skin cream, lotions and powders</td>
<td>UV filters e.g. benzophenones, octoxynylphenoxycinnamate or octocrylene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antibacterial soaps, toothpaste, tooth whitening products, deodorants, shaving products, creams</td>
<td>Tricosan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC &amp; polycarbonate plastics, e.g. food containers, water bottles, packaging, toys, construction materials, flooring, electronics</td>
<td>Phthalates e.g. dibutyl phthalate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry products, cleaning sprays/cloths chopping boards, air fresheners</td>
<td>Bisphenols e.g., BPA, BPS, BPAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture and soft furnishings, clothing, building materials, electronics</td>
<td>Tricosan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stain protection for furniture, non-stick cookware, food packaging, floor waxes, cleaners, textiles</td>
<td>Flame retardants e.g. Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed food</td>
<td>Poly- &amp; perfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) e.g. PFOA and PFTE</td>
</tr>
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Who we are
Breast Cancer UK uses the latest academic research on breast cancer prevention to provide guidance on how to reduce your risk. We campaign for better breast cancer prevention policies and fund animal-free research.

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 make a single or regular donation, through our website or via the post.

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 event, make a direct donation or partner with us – contact us for support.

Campaign Endorse one of our campaigns on an issue that could help save lives. Help spread our prevention message in the workplace or your community.

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