BRING YOUR brave.

BREAST CANCER **IN YOUNG WOMEN**

Cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. When cancer starts in the breast, it is called breast cancer. Except for skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer in American women.

Most breast cancers are found in women who are 50 and older, but breast cancer also affects younger women. About 11% of all new cases of breast cancer in the United States are found in women younger than 45 years of age. While breast cancer diagnosis and treatment are difficult for women of any age, younger women may find this experience overwhelming.

WHO HAS A **HIGHER RISK?**

Some young women are at a higher risk for getting breast cancer at an early age compared with other women their age. If you are a woman younger than age 45, you may have a higher risk if—

- You have close relatives who were diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancer (particularly at age 45 or younger).
- You have changes in certain breast cancer genes (BRCA1 and BRCA2).
- You are of Ashkenazi Jewish heritage.
- You were treated with radiation therapy to the breast or chest in childhood or early adulthood.
- You have had breast cancer or other breast health problems such as lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS), ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS), atypical ductal hyperplasia, or atypical lobular hyperplasia.

If you think you are at higher risk, talk to your doctor. Your doctor may refer you to a genetic counselor, recommend that you get screened earlier and more frequently, and consider medicines or surgeries that can lower your risk.

You have an average risk of getting breast cancer at a young age if the risk factors listed don't apply to you. If you are at average risk, it is important for you to know how your breasts normally look and feel. Talk to your doctor if you notice any changes in your breasts. Aside from genetics, little is known about what causes breast cancer in women younger than 45 years of age.

WHAT CAN I DO TO **REDUCE MY RISK OF BREAST CANCER?**

Many factors can influence your breast cancer risk, and most women who develop breast cancer do not have any known risk factors or a history of the disease in their families. However, you can help lower your risk of breast cancer in the following ways—

- Keep a healthy weight.
- Exercise regularly (at least four hours a week).
- Don't drink alcohol, or limit alcoholic drinks to no more than one per day.
- Avoid exposure to chemicals that can cause cancer (carcinogens).
- Try to reduce your exposure to radiation during medical tests like mammograms, X-rays, CT scans, and PET scans.
- If you are taking, or have been told to take, hormone replacement therapy or oral contraceptives (birth control pills), ask your doctor about the risks and find out if it is right for you.
- Breastfeed your babies, if possible.

More Information

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