



Encouraging Early Detection of Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers affecting women worldwide and occurs when malignant (cancer) cells form in the tissues of the breast. Breast cancer awareness is a crucial component to early detection, which significantly increases the chances of successful treatment. Almost 99% of women diagnosed with breast cancer at the earliest stage survive for five years or more, compared to about 32% of those diagnosed at the most advanced stage.¹

BREAST CANCER RISK FACTORS

Non-Modifiable Risk Factors:

- Being assigned female at birth
- Increasing age
- Genetic mutations, which are inherited through family genetics, like BRCA1 and BRCA2
- A family history of breast cancer
- Starting menstruation before age 12 and/or beginning menopause after age 55
- Dense breast tissue (more connective and fatty tissue)
- A history of other non-cancerous breast diseases

Modifiable Risk Factors:

- A lack of physical activity, obesity, or being overweight particularly in the perimenopause or menopausal period
- Consumption of alcohol or tobacco
- Use of some forms of hormone replacement therapies (HRT) for menopause that include estrogen, progesterone, and/or oral contraceptives
- No breastfeeding period

It is important to note that some people will develop breast cancer without any identifiable risk factors other than female sex and age over 50 years. Having a risk factor listed above does not mean you will get breast cancer and the impact of each risk factor varies. **Speak with your clinician to learn more about how these risk factors may impact you.**

BREAST CANCER SCREENING

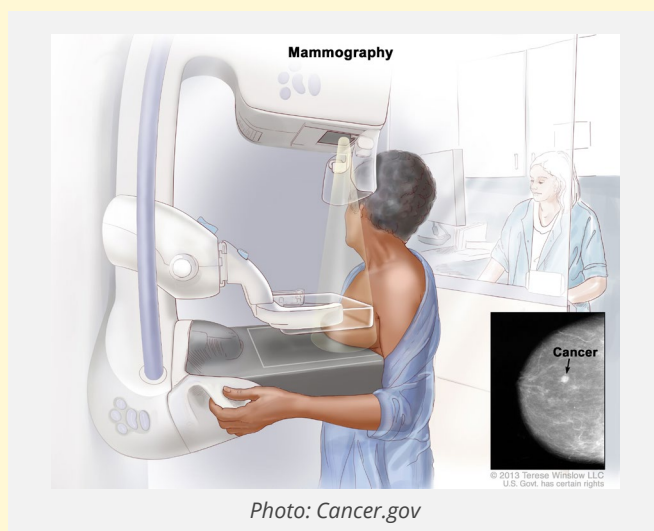
The Military Health System (MHS) follows US Preventive Health Task Force (USPSTF) recommendations for breast cancer screenings which recommend **annual and reoccurring 3D mammograms for individuals aged 40 or greater.**

Mammograms are critical for early detection of breast cancer years before physical symptoms appear.

TRICARE covers the following:

- ✓ An annual 3D mammogram for all women aged 40 or greater.
- ✓ 3D mammograms starting at age 30 if there is a 15% or greater lifetime risk of breast cancer.
- ✓ Annual breast magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) for women aged 30 or older who have a 20% or greater lifetime risk of breast cancer.
- ✓ Genetic counseling for BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene testing for persons identified as high risk for breast cancer based on medical and family history.
- ✓ Breast exams during annual well-woman exams.

A 3D mammogram is a cutting-edge imaging test and breast cancer screening tool that combines multiple breast x-rays to create a 3D picture of the breast.



Your primary care provider will work with you individually to find the best time to start regular screening for breast cancer.

Mammograms and ultrasounds may be recommended by clinicians for patients experiencing new abnormal symptoms (i.e., breast lump or abnormal discharge) or who are higher risk. Women are encouraged to report any new lumps, bumps, flaking, skin discoloration or new nipple discharge to their providers.



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BREAST SELF-EXAMS

While formal breast cancer screening is typically done by mammogram, breast self-exams are also used as an early detection tool. Breast self-exams are a combination of physical and visual examinations of the breasts to check for symptoms of breast cancer. The purpose of a breast self-exam is to **become familiar with the way your breasts normally look and feel so that you can identify any changes or abnormalities that may occur over time.**

HOW TO CONDUCT A BREAST EXAM

- 1 With the pads/flats of your three middle fingers, check the entire breast and armpit area, pressing down with light, medium, and firm pressure. Feel for any new lumps, thickenings, hardened knots, or any other breast changes since your last self-exam.
- 2 Next, while standing with your arms at your sides, visually examine them for changes in shape, contour, dimpling, swelling, skin irregularities, or nipple changes. Place your hands on your hips, press firmly to flex your chest muscles, and look for any dimpling, puckering, or changes, especially if they appear on one side.
- 3 Lie down, place a pillow under your right shoulder and put your right arm behind your head. Use the pads of your left hand's three middle fingers to examine your right breast and armpit with light, medium, and firm pressure, feeling for lumps, thickenings, or changes. Squeeze the nipple to check for discharge. Repeat on the left side.

It is recommended that adult women of all ages perform breast self-exams at least monthly.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR SERVICE WOMEN AND VETERANS WITH BREAST CANCER

Resource	Offerings
<u>Military Women's Patient Relief Fund – National Breast Cancer Foundation</u>	The National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF) offers the Military Women's Patient Relief Fund to aid servicewomen and veterans diagnosed with breast cancer. This fund alleviates financial burden via grants for treatment-related expenses, including transportation, lodging, and meals during care.
<u>Breast Cancer Support Group – Walter Reed National Military Medical Center</u>	Walter Reed offers a support group for patients diagnosed with breast cancer, providing emotional support and guidance through peer interaction and professional facilitators.
<u>VA Services for Veteran Women with Breast Cancer</u>	The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers comprehensive healthcare services for veteran women diagnosed with breast cancer, including screenings, clinical trials, telehealth, mental health care, genetic counseling and testing, and treatment.
<u>Disabled American Veterans (DAV)</u>	The DAV advocates for veterans with breast cancer and provides resources, including access to medical care, counseling, and assistance with VA claims.
<u>Veterans Health Issues and Breast Cancer Research – Women's Congressional Policy Institute</u>	The Women's Congressional Policy Institute provides insights into Congressional hearings that address health issues affecting women veterans, including breast cancer research. These hearings cover advancements in medical research, improving breast cancer screenings and treatment within the VA healthcare system, and ensuring quality care for servicewomen.