Breast Cancer Risks

There are some risk factors for breast cancer that you cannot change, including:

Gender: Simply being a woman is the main risk factor for developing breast cancer. Because women have many more breast cells than men do and perhaps because their breast cells are constantly exposed to the growth-promoting effects of female hormones, breast cancer is much more common in women. Men can develop breast cancer, but this disease is about 100 times more common among women than men.

Aging: Your risk of developing breast cancer increases as you get older. About 18% of breast cancer diagnoses are among women in their 40's, while about 77% of women with breast cancer are older than 50 when they are diagnosed.

Genetic risk factors: Recent studies have shown that about 5% to 10% of breast cancer cases are hereditary as a result of gene changes (mutations). The most common gene changes are those of the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes. Normally, these genes help to prevent cancer by making proteins that keep cells from growing abnormally. However, if you have inherited changed gene from either parent, you are at increased risk for breast cancer.

Breast Cancer Facts

- 13.2% of women born in the U.S. today will develop breast cancer at some point in their lives. That translates to about 1 in 8 women who will get cancer.
- This also means that 7 in 8 women have an 86.8% chance of never developing breast cancer.

(source: National Cancer Institute, Cancer Facts, 4/15/2005 Ries LAG, Eisner MP, Kosary CL, et al. (eds). *SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975–2002*, National Cancer Institute. Bethesda, MD, 2005 (http://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975_2002).

By age, a U.S. woman's chance of being diagnosed with breast cancer is:

- from age 30 through age 39 . . . . . 0.44 percent (often expressed as "1 in 229")
- from age 40 through age 49 . . . . . 1.46 percent (often expressed as "1 in 68")
- from age 50 through age 59 . . . . . 2.73 percent (often expressed as "1 in 37")
- from age 60 through age 69 . . . . . 3.82 percent (often expressed as "1 in 26")

These probabilities are averages for the whole population. An individual woman's breast cancer risk may be higher or lower, depending on a number of factors, including her family history, reproductive history, race/ethnicity, and other factors that are not yet fully understood.

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For more information on women's health, visit anthem.com. Also visit the following sites:

National Cancer Institute - www.cancer.gov
American Cancer Society – www.cancer.org
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – www.cdc.gov
National Institutes of Health – www.nih.gov

Source: National Cancer Institute, www.cancer.gov.

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