

What is Breast Cancer Awareness Month?

During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we help people become more aware of breast cancer: the risks of getting it, the value of screening and early detection, and treatment options available to women and men who get breast cancer.

What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer starts when cells in the breast begin to grow out of control. These cells usually form a tumor that can often be seen on an X-ray or felt as a lump. The tumor is *malignant* if the cells can grow into surrounding tissues or spread to distant areas of the body. Breast cancer occurs almost entirely in women, but men can get breast cancer, too.

Breast cancer signs and symptoms

Knowing how your breasts normally look and feel is an important part of breast health. Finding breast cancer as early as possible gives you a better chance of successful treatment.

The most common symptom of breast cancer is a new lump or mass. It is important to have any new breast mass or lump or breast change checked by a health care provider experienced in diagnosing breast diseases. Other possible symptoms include:

- Swelling of all or part of a breast.
- Skin irritation or dimpling.
- Breast or nipple pain.
- Nipple retraction (turning inward).
- Redness, scaliness, or thickening of the nipple or breast skin.
- Nipple discharge.

Knowing what to look for does not take the place of having regular mammograms and other screening tests.

Screening tests can help find breast cancer in its early stages, even before any symptoms appear.

Mobile apps

- [B4BC](#)
- [CareZone](#)
- [My Cancer Coach App](#)

Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Mark Epstein, MD**, our President and CEO. Many factors over the course of a lifetime can influence your breast cancer risk. You can't change some factors like getting older or your family history. But you can help lower your risk of breast cancer by taking care of your health by:

- Keeping a healthy weight.
- Exercising regularly (at least four hours a week).
- Not drinking alcohol or limiting alcoholic drinks to no more than one per day.
- Avoiding exposure to chemicals that can cause cancer and chemicals that interfere with the body's normal functions.
- Limiting exposure to radiation from medical imaging tests like X-rays, CT scans, and PET scans if not medically necessary.
- Breastfeeding your babies, if possible.

Staying healthy throughout your life will lower your risk of developing cancer. It also will improve your chances of surviving cancer if you get it. Talk to your doctor about more ways to lower your risk. You can find radiology centers in the True Health New Mexico provider network that offer mammograms by visiting our [Quick Search PDFs page](#).

More resources

- [American Cancer Society](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [healthfinder.gov](#)
- [National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc.](#)