

For women: your guide to breast exams and mammograms

Your to-do list is already packed. The last thing you want to worry about is having breast cancer. However, every three minutes a woman in the United States is diagnosed. Thankfully, when caught early, breast cancer has a 98 percent cure rate. Here's our no-excuses guide to getting tested.

6 reasons to get tested

- 1 You're adding candles to the birthday cake.** About one in eight breast cancers are found in women under age 45, while about two in three breast cancers are found in women over age 55, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS). Having children later in life also can increase your risk by 30 percent.
- 2 It's in the family.** Women with blood relatives having breast cancer carry a higher risk and double that risk if it was your mom, sister or daughter. Keep a health family tree and include the names, relation, disease and diagnosis age. Don't forget your dad's family, too. Northside's Hereditary Cancer Program offers screening to detect cancer-causing gene mutations, such as BRCA1 or BRCA2. Call (404) 851-6284 to learn more.
- 3 You've added some pounds.** Extra body fat can increase your estrogen and blood insulin levels, increasing your risk for breast cancer, especially after menopause. Curb weight gain by keeping a food diary or swap out large dinner plates for smaller versions.

Ditch saturated fats and red meats for veggies, whole grains and lean protein.

- 4 You can't find time to exercise.** Exercise decreases your odds of getting breast cancer by keeping your weight in check. Can't get to the gym? Skinny up your day by taking the stairs instead of the elevator, parking farther away at work or doing calf raises in the grocery line.
- 5 You drink more than one alcoholic beverage a day.** Women who drink two to five alcoholic beverages daily have a one-and-a-half times greater risk than women who don't drink. Switch to sparkling water and fruit after that first glass of wine.
- 6 You discover a change in your breast.** It could be discharge, a lump in your breast or an inward facing nipple—any breast change is important to communicate to your doctor. Becoming familiar with how your breasts look and feel can help you identify unusual changes.

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When to start your breast exams

Ages 20 and older

Breast Self-Exam (BSE): A monthly BSE helps detect changes in your breasts and nipples. Mark your reminder in pink a week after your menstrual cycle, when your hormones are most stable and your breasts are less tender. Think visual—changes in contour or texture—and manual—feeling for any lumps or thickness in the skin. Questions? Contact Northside's Breast Health Coordinator at (404) 851-6161.

Clinical Breast Exam (CBE): Have this hands-on examination every three years and annually beginning at age 40. A doctor will knead the skin around the breasts and underarms to search for lumps.

Ages 40 and older

Mammogram: An annual mammogram, or X-ray of the breast, can find tumors that are too small to see or feel. Early breast cancer is often found on a mammogram before a lump can even be felt. Expect a few moments of compression as each breast is pressed between two plates.



5 mammogram excuses debunked

As the regional leader in the fight against breast cancer, diagnosing and treating more cases of the disease than any other community hospital in the Southeast, Northside stands by the ACS and its recommendation that all women receive annual mammograms beginning at age 40.

Don't fall victim to the following common excuses to put off getting your mammogram:

1 I'm too busy. Mammograms take about 20 minutes, and the actual breast compression only lasts a few seconds. Northside makes it easy with 12 imaging locations in Atlanta, Forsyth and Cherokee, offering flexible hours that include early morning, late evening and Saturday appointments. To schedule a mammogram, call (404) 851-6577. Throughout the year, Northside's mobile mammography van travels around the community; call (770) 667-4400 to learn more.



2 I can't afford it. Medicare, Medicaid and most private insurance plans cover a percentage or the full cost of a screening mammogram once every 365 days. With the support of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, Northside funds mammograms and diagnostic services for qualified applicants who aren't otherwise covered.

3 I'm afraid they may find something scary. Only one or two mammograms in 1,000 lead to a cancer diagnosis, according to the ACS. A mammogram increases your treatment options by catching breast cancer early; shared knowledge means better care.

4 I don't have a family history of breast cancer. The ACS estimates that more than 70 percent of breast cancer patients don't have a family history of the disease.

5 It'll hurt. Worried about discomfort? Schedule your screening one week after your period when your breasts are less tender and limit caffeine a few days prior to the screen. You can also try taking a mild over-the-counter pain reliever about an hour before your mammogram.

A man's guide to cancer screenings

You're healthy, with no aches or pains, so you don't need to see your doctor, right? Wrong. You may not be sick now, but you need an annual checkup to stay healthy. During your routine exam, your physician may recommend cancer screenings, many of which can spot the disease when it's still beatable. Discussing your age, health, family history and lifestyle will assist you and your physician in determining which screenings are appropriate.

Prostate cancer

Prostate cancer affects one in every six men. It's the second most common cancer in American men after skin cancer. Prostate cancer usually has no symptoms in early stages. When caught early, chances of survival increase significantly.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends that men discuss the benefits and limitations of early detection beginning at age 50 if you're at average risk, or at age 45 if you're at high risk. Men at high risk include African-Americans and those with a first-degree relative (father, brother, son) diagnosed at an early age (younger than age 65). Men with several first-degree relatives having prostate cancer at an early age should discuss the pros and cons of early screening with their physician beginning at age 40.

Testicular cancer

Testicular cancer is the second most common cancer in teens and the most common cancer in men ages 20 to 34. The ACS reports a man's lifetime chance of having testicular cancer is about one in 300. Because treatment is so successful, the risk of dying is very low: about one in 5,000. Your healthcare provider may do a testicular exam as part of a regular checkup and, depending on your risk factors, may recommend monthly self-exams.



Atlanta's leader in prostate cancer care

At Northside Hospital, more prostate cancer cases are diagnosed and treated each year than at any other community hospital in Atlanta. Ninety-six percent of the cases are diagnosed in the earliest stages of disease, ahead of the national average.

Symptoms of prostate cancer

➔ **Contact your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms:**

- Blood in urine or semen
- Frequent pain or stiffness in the lower back, hips, ribs or upper thighs
- Trouble having or keeping an erection (impotence)
- Painful or burning urination
- Weakness or numbness in the legs or feet

Screenings for men and women

Your best weapon against cancer? Early detection. Read on for screening recommendations for cancers that affect both men and women.

Lung cancer

As one of the most frequently treated forms of cancer at Northside Hospital, lung cancer is the deadliest cancer in both men and women. Each year, more people die of lung cancer than breast, colon and prostate cancers combined. People with early-stage lung cancer often don't have any symptoms, and in many cases, it's found when having an X-ray for another reason.

Colorectal cancer

Colorectal cancer often has no obvious early warning signs or visible symptoms. Subtle symptoms such as pain in the lower abdomen, rectal bleeding, unexplained weight loss, constipation and fatigue may only appear when the disease is in an advanced stage, which is why it's important to have regular screenings. When detected early, the five-year survival rate is more than 90 percent.

Everyone should begin colorectal cancer screening by age 50. Screenings should be done every five to 10 years to detect and remove any precancerous polyps. The American College of Gastroenterology recommends that African-Americans begin routine screening at age 45. If you have a personal or family history of colon polyps or colorectal cancer, talk with your doctor about beginning screening even earlier.

Skin cancer

Skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer. Periodically examine your skin to monitor any changes to existing moles or new moles. Starting at age 20, have your dermatologist or healthcare provider check your skin every three years.

The Cancer Support Community

The Wellness Community and Gilda's Club Worldwide have joined together to become the Cancer Support Community (CSC)—the nation's largest professionally led network of social and emotional support for cancer patients, their loved ones and caregivers.

CSC-Atlanta, the organization's Atlanta affiliate, is associated with Northside Hospital and continues to host educational, social and therapeutic programs to provide support, companionship and hope for their participants. Activities include:

- Art therapy programs
- Cooking demonstrations
- Educational seminars
- Gentle exercise classes
- Stress reduction programs
- Support groups and special programs for children

Licensed therapists and trained professionals lead programs, offering encouragement and hope. Everyone whose life has been touched by a cancer diagnosis is welcome to participate.

CSC services are free and offered in Atlanta, Forsyth and Cherokee. Visit www.cscatlanta.org.



Symptoms of lung cancer

→ **Report any of the problems below to your physician immediately:**

- A persistent or intense cough
- Coughing up blood or phlegm tinged with blood
- Harsh sounds accompanying breathing
- Recurrent lung problems such as bronchitis or pneumonia
- Shortness of breath

Early detection is key

Be prepared to discuss any symptoms or health changes at your doctor's appointment. Follow up on your physician's recommendations for screening and treatments to ensure you stay cancer free.