

Breast cancer in men



What is breast cancer in men?

Breast cancer results from an abnormal growth of cells in the breast tissue that turn to a benign cancer or a malignant cancer. All men have breast tissue and therefore have the ability to develop breast cancer. The American Cancer Society estimated that roughly 2 800 new cancer diagnosis will be found in men in the year 2022, and an average of 530 men will die from breast cancer this year. In South Africa, only 1-3% of all breast cancer diagnosis are made in men.

Are there differences between male and female breasts?

The structure of the male breast is almost identical to that of the female breast. The only difference is that the male breast tissue does not have mammary glands and mammary lobules which aid in the production of milk. In addition, the female breast has a lot of fatty tissue.

Therefore, the most common types of breast cancers found in women are also seen in men, and how they progress is also similar. Awareness should be raised in men so that they can be vigilant of the symptoms of breast cancer in order to pick up the signs early and to seek medical assistance.



What to look out for

The older you are, the higher the likelihood of developing breast cancer, especially from the age of 40.



Find out if:

- There's a family history of breast cancer in either a male or female family member. This increases the chances of developing breast cancer.
- You have been exposed to an increase in oestrogen hormones as it has an effect in increasing the risk of breast cancer. All men have oestrogen, although in much smaller amounts compared to women, however, conditions such as obesity and liver disease increase the levels of oestrogen.

Signs of breast cancer in men

- A lump in the breast or thickening of breast tissue
- A lump that continues to grow in size and is painful
- Change in colour of the skin over the breast area
- Skin over the breast area that has dimples
- The nipple inverting or beginning to have a discharge

How to prevent breast cancer?



- Manage weight - since obesity increases oestrogen levels, managing your weight improves your risk.
- Look after your liver - the liver is the primary organ that metabolises oestrogen. When you develop liver disease, especially cirrhosis, which commonly results from alcoholism, the metabolism of oestrogen is impaired, leaving higher levels of oestrogen than normal.
- Exercise - being physically active has been proven to reduce the risk of multiple chronic conditions as well as cancers in both men and women.



Diagnosis and treatment

Breast cancer is diagnosed and treated the same way in both men and women. **Speak to your doctor to find out how.**

www.mybreast.org.za
www.cansa.org.za