

## Who gets breast cancer?

Everyone is at risk for breast cancer. The two most common risk factors for breast cancer are:

- Being female
- Getting older

No matter your age, you should get to know how your breasts normally look and feel. If you notice any changes, see a doctor.

## Lesbian, gay and bisexual women — is there an increased risk?

Although lesbian, gay and bisexual women have a greater risk of breast cancer than other women, it's not because of their sexual orientation. Rather, the increased risk is linked to breast cancer risk factors that tend to be more common in these women (such as never having children or having children later in life, obesity and alcohol use). All of these factors increase breast cancer risk.

## Screening rates

Data on breast cancer screening rates are mixed. Some findings show the rates of screening mammography among lesbians and bisexual women and heterosexual women are similar.

Some data even show screening mammography rates are higher among gay and lesbian women compared to straight women.

In 2015 (most recent data available):

- 78 percent of gay and lesbian women had a mammogram in the past 2 years
- 64 percent of straight women had a mammogram in the past 2 years

However, other findings show lesbians and bisexual women may not get regular mammograms.

Possible reasons for lower screening rates include:

- Lack of health insurance
- Perceived low risk of breast cancer



*Seeing a health care provider on a regular basis for a clinical breast exam and mammogram is important for the early detection of breast cancer.*

- Past experience of discrimination or insensitivity from doctors
- Low level of trust of doctors

Some people may avoid or delay seeing a doctor because of concerns about being treated poorly due to their lifestyle. Once you find a provider you like, see him/her on a regular basis. These visits offer the chance to get routine health screenings and other medical care. Regular screening tests (along with follow-up tests and treatment if diagnosed) reduce your chance of dying from breast cancer.

## Transgender or Questioning/Queer people

At this time, data on the risk of breast cancer among transgender or questioning/queer people are limited or do not exist. If you are transgender or questioning/queer, talk with a doctor about your breast cancer risk and which screening tests may be right for you. It is important to find a doctor who is sensitive to your needs and to see that doctor on a regular basis. The resources on the back of this fact sheet may help.

## So what can I do? Take charge of your health!

- Choose a doctor who makes you feel at ease.
- Learn about your family health history and talk with a doctor about your risk.  
[Check out the Family Health History tool](#)
- Talk with a doctor about which screening tests are right for you if you are at a higher risk.
- Sign up for your screening reminder at [komen.org/reminder](http://komen.org/reminder)
- Know how your breasts normally look and feel and report any changes to a doctor.
- Make healthy lifestyle choices — maintain a healthy weight, get regular exercise, limit alcohol intake and menopausal hormone use (postmenopausal hormones) and breastfeed, if you can.
- Contact an organization about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender health concerns. See resources below.

## Resources

Susan G. Komen®  
1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)  
[www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

Gay and Lesbian Medical Association  
202-600-8037  
[www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org)

The Mautner Project of Whitman-Walker Health  
202-745-7000  
[www.whitman-walker.org/mautnerproject](http://www.whitman-walker.org/mautnerproject)

National LGBT Cancer Network  
212-675-2633  
[www.cancer-network.org](http://www.cancer-network.org)

The National LGBT Cancer Project  
212-673-4920  
[www.lgbtcancer.org](http://www.lgbtcancer.org)



## Related fact sheets in this series:

- Breast Cancer & Risk
- Healthy Living
- Talking With Your Doctor

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