



The Trinidad and Tobago Cancer Society

# Breast Cancer

Early Detection & Treatment Guidelines



[www.cancertt.com](http://www.cancertt.com)

## What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer is a malignant tumor that starts in the cells of the breast. Although breast cancer is a common form of cancer in women, male breast cancer does occur and accounts for about 1% of all cancer deaths in men.

## How is Breast Cancer Diagnosed?

While the majority of new breast cancers are diagnosed as a result of an abnormality seen on a mammogram or lump, a change in consistency of the breast tissue can also be a warning sign of the disease. For this reason, it is important that any new breast mass, lump or a change in the consistency of the breast tissue should be checked by a health care professional experienced in diagnosing breast diseases. If abnormalities are found by a screening mammogram, the following are additional tests that can be used by physicians to diagnose breast cancer:

- Ultrasound
- MRI
- Diagnostic Mammogram – a more detailed x-ray of the breast
- Biopsy

## When Should The Breasts Be Examined?

Every month, one week after your period is the best time. Your breasts are softer and easier to examine. The breasts are examined for two reasons:

1. To get to know what is normal for you
2. To discover any changes in them early

If you've stopped having periods, do it on the same date every month.

## What Are The Symptoms and Signs of Breast Cancer?

The main symptoms include:

- A lump or thickening of an area of the breast that does not disappear after a reasonable period of time
- Changes in the size or shape of the breast
- Changes in the skin of the breast such as dimpling, puckering or a rash
- Breast pain that does not go away after a reasonable period of time
- Inverted nipple or unusual nipple discharge

## What Are The Risk Factors Of Breast Cancer?

The actual cause of breast cancer is unknown, but the following risk factors have been linked to the disease:

- Heredity/genetic predisposition – any woman who has a female relative, on maternal side of her family with breast cancer.
- Early commencement of menstruation (before 12 years) and late onset of menopause (after 50 years)
- Having a first baby at a late age (after 30 years) or having no children
- Obesity/overweight

## How Is Breast Cancer Treated?

Breast cancer is treated in several ways. It depends on the kind of breast cancer and how far it has spread. People with breast cancer often get more than one kind of treatment.

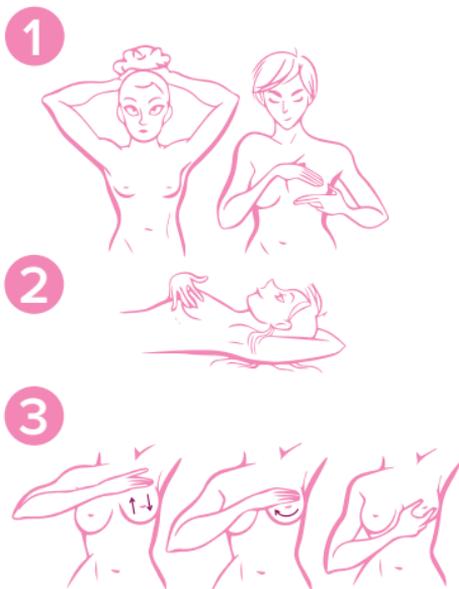
- **Surgery:** An operation where doctors cut out and remove cancer tissue.
- **Chemotherapy:** Drugs to shrink or kill the cancer. The drug can be pills you take or medicines given through an intravenous (IV) tube, or, sometimes, both.
- **Hormonal Therapy:** Hormonal treatment is used to block cancer cells from getting the hormones they need to grow.
- **Radiation:** The use of high-energy rays (similar to X-rays) to kill the cancer cells.

## Got A Few Minutes?

Take a few minutes to examine your breast every month to help with the early discovery of breast cancer. This should be a lifetime habit that could save your life.

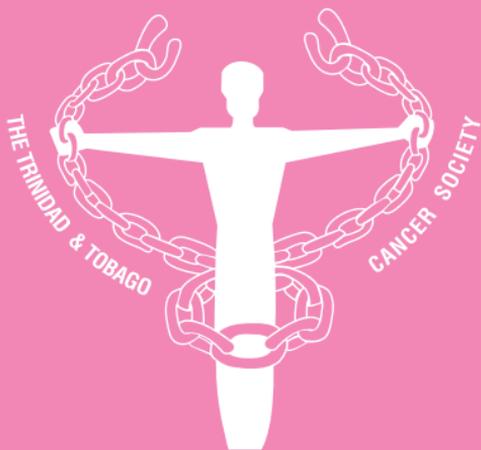
## Who Needs To Do A Breast Check?

- Every woman should start checking her breast from her early teens and onward.
- Breast self examination, (BSE) helps women to become familiar with the normal look and feel of their breast, as well as checking for changes in the breast.



The Trinidad and Tobago Cancer Society recommends that you always consult your healthcare provider.

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