



THE TRINIDAD & TOBAGO CANCER SOCIETY

Breast Cancer

Early Detection & Treatment Guidelines

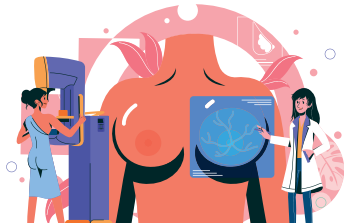
What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is a malignant tumor that begins in the cells of the breast. While it is most common in women, male breast cancer accounts for about 1% of all breast cancer cases and should not be overlooked.

How is breast cancer diagnosed?

Most breast cancers are detected through routine screening or when a patient notices a lump or change in the breast tissue. If abnormalities are found, the following tests help confirm a diagnosis:

- Mammogram – X-ray imaging of the breast to detect early signs of cancer.
- Ultrasound – Uses sound waves to evaluate breast abnormalities.
- MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) – Provides a detailed view, especially useful for high-risk patients.
- Biopsy – Removal of a small tissue sample for laboratory examination.



When should breast exams be done?

- Breast self-examinations (BSE) should be performed monthly, preferably one week after your period when breast tissue is less tender.
- If postmenopausal, choose a consistent date each month.
- Clinical breast exams should be performed by a healthcare provider at least every 3 years for women in their 20s and 30s and annually after age 40.

What are the symptoms of breast cancer?

- A lump or thickening in the breast or underarm.
- Changes in size, shape, or appearance of the breast.
- Dimpling, puckering, or redness of breast skin.
- Unusual nipple discharge (especially if bloody).
- Pain in the breast or nipple that persists.
- Inverted nipple (pulling inward).

What are the risk factors for breast cancer?

While the exact cause of breast cancer is unknown, several risk factors have been identified:

- Genetics & Family History – BRCA1/BRCA2 gene mutations or a first-degree relative (mother, sister, daughter) with breast cancer increase risk.
- Hormonal Factors – Early menstruation (before age 12) or late menopause (after age 55) increases lifetime estrogen exposure.
- Late or No Childbearing – Having a first child after 30 or never giving birth.

- Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) – Long-term use of estrogen and progesterone therapy.
- Obesity & Lifestyle Factors – Being overweight, lack of physical activity, and excessive alcohol consumption.

How can breast cancer be prevented?

While not all breast cancers are preventable, risk can be significantly reduced by:

- Regular screening with mammograms.
- Maintaining a healthy weight and exercising regularly.
- Limiting alcohol intake to no more than one drink per day.
- Eating a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Breastfeeding, which has protective benefits.
- Avoiding smoking and secondhand smoke exposure.

Breast cancer screening guidelines

- Women 40-49 – Discuss screening with a doctor, as risk varies.
- Women 50-74 – Mammograms every 1-2 years (as recommended by a doctor).
- High-risk women – May need earlier and more frequent screenings (e.g., annual MRI + mammogram starting at age 30 if BRCA-positive).

How is breast cancer treated?

Treatment depends on the type and stage of breast cancer and often involves multiple approaches:

- Surgery – Removal of the tumor (lumpectomy) or entire breast (mastectomy).
- Chemotherapy – Uses drugs to kill cancer cells or shrink tumors before surgery.
- Radiation Therapy – High-energy rays to target cancer cells, typically after surgery.
- Hormonal Therapy – For hormone-receptor-positive cancers, blocking estrogen/progesterone helps prevent recurrence.
- Targeted Therapy – Uses drugs to target specific proteins involved in cancer growth (e.g., HER2 inhibitors like trastuzumab).

Testing for the subtype of breast cancer is important to determine sequence of treatment.

Early detection saves lives

Take a few minutes each month to check your breasts. Early detection through self-exams, clinical exams, and mammograms significantly improves survival rates.



BECOME A MEMBER 800 TTCS (8827)

#69 Dundonald Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.
868.226.1221 | bookings@cancer.tt | www.cancertt.com

This publication was made possible by your donation to
The Trinidad and Tobago Cancer Society.

Note: This information is based on guidelines
and data available as of 2026. For personalized
medical advice, always consult with a
healthcare professional.

www.who.int
www.health.com

