

What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in NSW, with 1 in 7 women developing breast cancer in their lifetime. (Annual NSW cancer incidence and mortality data set, 2016, NSW Cancer Registry, Cancer Institute NSW)

Breast cancer happens when a collection of cells in the breast tissue grow in an uncontrolled way. These cancer cells can also travel to other parts of the body and grow there too. There are different types of breast cancer, depending on where the cancer is located within the breast or whether it has spread in an area outside the breast.

How do I become breast aware?

It is important to be familiar with your breast, know how your breast look and feel, so that when you see any changes, you can seek help as soon as possible. You can use a mirror to become familiar with the usual look and shape of your breasts. It is helpful to be familiar with the normal feel of your breast at different times of the month and menstrual cycle, you can do this while you are in the shower or bath, lying in bed or when getting dressed.

What are the symptoms of breast cancer?

If you have any breast problems or if you notice any of the following, please see your doctor to have a breast examination and discuss other test like Xray and ultrasound of the breasts.

..... Look for... ..

	A change in size or shape of your breast.		A change to the nipple, such as crusting, an ulcer, redness or an inversion.
	Nipple discharge that occurs without squeezing.		A change to the skin of your breast, such as redness or dimpling.

..... Feel for... ..

	A new lump or lumpiness, especially if it's only in one breast.		An unusual pain in your breast or armpit that doesn't go away.
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Signs and symptoms of breast cancer. BreastScreen NSW.

What are the risk factors of breast cancer?

The causes of breast cancer are still not fully understood, there are a number of factors that puts an individual at an increased risk of developing breast cancer. Being a woman, increasing age,

having a strong family history of breast cancer, having a personal history of breast cancer , hormonal factors , childbearing history, personal and lifestyle factors are some of these.

How is breast cancer diagnosed?

The triple test is used to the diagnosis of breast cancer. This include a breast examination by your doctor, imaging tests (mammogram or ultrasound of the breast/s) and taking a sample of the breast tissue for examination under the microscope (biopsy).

What are the treatment options for breast cancer?

Treatment depends on the type and stage of the cancer, severity of symptoms and the individual's general health. It usually involves removal of the part or all of the affected breast and removal of one or more lymph nodes from the armpit. Breast reconstruction may be suitable for those women who have the whole breast removed. Other treatment options include radiotherapy, chemotherapy, hormonal therapies. This is usually provided by a team of health professionals.

What is breast screen?

When the cancer is detected early, it has the best chance of being removed and cured. The best time to treat the cancer is when it is still very small. Thus, women aged 50-74 years are encouraged to have a free mammogram at BreastScreen every 2 years. A mammogram is an Xray of the breast, it can detect cancer even before you notice any changes in your breasts. The service can be located in different hospitals, shopping centres and mobile vans. To find your nearest BreastScreen NSW service, call 13 20 50 or visit breastscreen.nsw.gov.au.

Please keep in mind that the breast screening is only for women who do not have symptoms in their breasts. If you have any concerns and notice any changes in your breasts, please book an appointment to see GP as soon as you can.

References:

BreastScreen NSW

Breast Cancer, Cancer Australia

Breast awareness, Family Planning NSW

Breast Cancer Pathology, Breast Cancer Network Australia