

MALE BREAST CANCER IN NEW ZEALAND



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- Breast cancer is uncommon in men. Male breast cancer occurs in only 1% of all breast cancer cases.
- 25 men a year get breast cancer in New Zealand.
- The same tumour types which occur in women also occur in men although the commonest type of male breast cancer is invasive carcinoma of no special type. (also known as invasive ductal carcinoma).
- Men diagnosed with breast cancer at any age should be referred for genetic testing.
- The overall survival rate for men with breast cancer is similar to women. In New Zealand this means a five- year survival rate of 80 – 85%.

Signs and symptoms

These are the same as for breast cancer in women and may include:

- A lump or thickening. In men this is usually found behind or close to the nipple and areola.
- Nipple changes such as a new inversion, skin flaking, itching, or ulceration.
- Fluid discharge from the nipple.
- A change in breast shape or appearance e.g swelling, redness or skin dimpling.
- A painless lump in the armpit.

Enlargement of both breasts is usually not related to breast cancer.

Risk factors for men

- Getting older. Most male breast cancer occurs in men over the age of 65. Although it can occur in younger men.
- A BRCA2 gene mutation.
- A strong family history of breast (and/or ovarian) cancer.
- Hormonal imbalance – Men normally produce a small amount of oestrogen but some conditions cause more of this female hormone to be produced, increasing the risk of breast cancer:
 - Being overweight or obese raises oestrogen levels (fat cells produce oestrogen).
 - Liver conditions such as cirrhosis are associated with increased oestrogen levels.
 - Klinefelter’s Syndrome, a rare disease seen in 1:1000 men. Men with this syndrome have an extra sex chromosome (XXY) rather than the usual XY. Their breast cancer risk is the same as in women.

- Previous radiotherapy treatment to the chest when young e.g. for lymphoma.
- Screening mammograms do not stop the development of breast cancer, but can reduce the risk of dying from breast cancer by approximately 33%.
- Mammography is more effective as a breast cancer screening tool or breast cancer diagnostic tool than breast thermography. A breast thermogram is not an adequate replacement for a screening or diagnostic mammogram.
- The best way to ensure early detection of breast cancer is to supplement regular mammograms with general breast awareness. Know what your breasts normally look and feel like and report any changes to your GP promptly. Don't ignore any changes which develop between mammograms.

**To enrol with BreastScreen Aotearoa, call 0800 270 200
or go online www.timetoscreen.nz**