

Breast cancer risk

Health information after cancer treatment as a child or teenager

The purpose of this factsheet is to tell you about long-term side effects (called 'late effects') that can happen after having cancer treatment. They can happen soon after treatment has finished or later in life. The medical team at the hospital where you received your treatment or your long-term follow-up team will be able to help you with specific information about which late effects are relevant to you.

Some of the treatments used to treat childhood cancer can affect breast tissue. These treatments may:

- affect the way your breasts grow
- affect your ability to breast feed after having a baby
- increase the risk of developing breast cancer throughout your life, when compared to women the same age as you in the general population

Who is at risk?

The risk of breast cancer is largely related to radiotherapy treatment and in particular the amount of breast tissue treated and the dose of radiotherapy received. People treated with higher doses of radiation to larger volumes of breast tissue have the highest risk.

Other known risk factors include:

- age
- hormonal causes:
 - periods starting before the age of 12
 - late menopause (after age 55)
 - never having a baby or having a first baby after the age of 30
 - use of contraceptive pill and/or HRT
- having a close relative with breast cancer and/or breast cancer genes
- high fat diet and/or being overweight
- lifestyle factors

How is it diagnosed?

If a woman develops breast cancer following radiotherapy to breast tissue, it may happen at a younger age than in other women who develop breast cancer (usually aged 50 or older). For this reason, some women will be invited to commence breast cancer screening at an earlier age than normal (25-30 years). You will be informed if this is advisable for you.

What can I do?

- **be breast aware:**
 - know what is normal for your breasts
 - know what changes to look for (a lump, skin or nipple change)
 - look at and feel your breasts regularly
 - report any changes to your doctor without delay
- **ask your clinical team** about your individual risk, options for screening and other treatments and attend breast screening when advised to do so
- **don't smoke** – smoking increases the risk of many cancers including breast cancer
- watch your **diet and weight** in particular avoid a high fat diet – being overweight increases your risk when older
- watch your **alcohol** intake – too much increases your risk

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- **exercise** – this reduces your risk of breast cancer
- **breastfeed** if you can
- discuss **contraception and HRT** with your oncologist if relevant
- if you come from a family with a **genetic** type of breast cancer, you should be referred to a genetic clinic

Where can I find more information?

Breast Cancer Now
www.breastcancer.org.uk

Cancer Research UK website
www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/breast-cancer

Coppafeel
www.coppafeel.org



the **EXPERTS**
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CANCER

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ChildrensCLG CCLG_UK

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Written by CCLG Late Effects Group, a national network of experts who specialise in looking after young cancer survivors, in conjunction with the CCLG Information Advisory Group, comprising multiprofessional experts in the field of children's cancer. If you have any comments on this factsheet, please contact us. CCLG publications on a variety of topics related to children's cancer are available to order or download free of charge from our website.

Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group (CCLG) is a leading national charity and expert voice for all childhood cancers.

Each week in the UK and Ireland, more than 30 children are diagnosed with cancer. Our network of dedicated professional members work together in treatment, care and research to help shape a future where all children with cancer survive and live happy, healthy and independent lives.

We fund and support innovative world-class research and collaborate, both nationally and internationally, to drive forward improvements in childhood cancer. Our award-winning information resources help lessen the anxiety, stress and loneliness commonly felt by families, giving support throughout the cancer journey.

Our work is funded by donations. If you would like to help, text '**CCLG**' to **70300** to donate **£3**. You may be charged for one text message at your network's standard or charity rate. CCLG (registered charity numbers 1182637 and SC049948) will receive 100% of your donation.