

Family History Clinic

At the clinic you will have the opportunity to talk to a breast specialist about your family history and your breast cancer risks and options.

Your chance of developing breast cancer based on your family history will be explained.

The need for organising regular mammography (x-ray examinations of the breast) will also be discussed.

If appropriate you will be referred to a genetic clinic. Only a small minority of people with a very strong family history of breast cancer are likely to have an altered breast cancer gene. Very few women referred to the genetics clinic meet the criteria to be offered a genetic test (a blood test which may be used to help predict the risk of developing breast cancer).

For more information please contact:

Beds & Herts Breast Cancer Family History Screening Service

Lewsey Road
Luton
Beds
LU4 0DN
Tel: 01582 497594.

Breast Cancer Care

Kiln House,
210, New King's Road
London
SW6 4NZ
Helpline: 0808 800 6000
Internet: <http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk>

Macmillan Cancer Support

89, Albert Embankment
London
SE1 7UQ
Helpline 0808 808 0000
Internet: www.macmillan.org.uk

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

Mid City Place
71, High Holborn
London
WC1V 6NA
Internet: www.nice.org.uk

National Hereditary Breast Cancer Helpline

Telephone: 01629 813000
Internet: www.breastcancerogenetics.co.uk



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Patient Information Leaflet



Breast Cancer Facts

Breast Cancer is a common disease. One in nine women in the UK (11%) will develop breast cancer during her lifetime.

Of the women who do get breast cancer, most (approximately 4 out of 5 women diagnosed) are over the age of 50. **Most cases of breast cancer detected early are successfully treated with modern treatments now available.**

Breast Cancer in Families

Because breast cancer is a common disease, many of us have one or more relatives who have had breast cancer. When many members of the same family have been diagnosed with the same illness, it is only natural to wonder whether an inherited factor is involved. **Most of the time, however, breast cancer occurs by unlucky chance and is not caused by an altered gene.**

Having a mother or sister with breast cancer does not mean you are necessarily at risk of having an altered breast cancer gene. Your chance of developing breast cancer may only be a little higher than that of the average women in the community.

Your family history of breast cancer becomes more important:

- The more relatives you have on the same side of the family (mother's or father's side) who have had breast cancer diagnosed.
- The younger your relatives were when they were first diagnosed (especially under 50).

- The more closely related these relatives are to you.
- When there is a case of bilateral breast cancer (diagnosed in both breasts), male breast cancer, or breast cancer, or breast and ovarian cancer in the family.

Breast Cancer Genes

In approximately 5% of breast cancer cases (1 in 20), and especially when there is a very strong family history of breast cancer, it seems that an altered gene is largely responsible.

In these families, the altered gene can be passed down from one generation to the next by the mother or by the father. Family members who inherit this gene are at higher than normal risk of getting breast (and sometimes also ovarian) cancer and may be affected at an earlier age than usual. However, there is only a 50% (1 in 2) chance of inheriting the gene from a parent who is carrying the altered gene. Family members who do not inherit the gene are not at an increased risk of breast or ovarian cancer.

Seeing a GP about Cancer in the Family

Your GP may advise you that your family history does not significantly change your risk of getting breast cancer, compared to the risk for any women of your age. In this case, you may wish to consider:

- **Breast awareness at any age:** Get to know what is normal for you. Learn the signs and symptoms of breast cancer to look and feel for. See your doctor, if you notice any changes

that are not normal for you. Leaflets on breast awareness are available from your GP or from the organisations listed on the back of this leaflet.

- **Breast screening at the age of 50 and over:** The NHS Breast Screening Programme offers mammograms (x-ray examinations of the breast) every three years, to all women aged 50 - 70 in the UK (70 and over; screening available on request). These check-ups aim to detect cancers at a very early stage when they can often be successfully treated.
- **Notifying your GP if your family history changes**

Referral to Beds and Herts Breast Cancer Family History Screening Service

Your GP may refer you to a specialist to discuss your family history of breast cancer in detail.

Prior to any appointment you will be asked to complete and return a detailed questionnaire about your family.

Following analysis of this questionnaire, women considered to be at a low risk of developing breast cancer, will be reassured that they will not require an appointment for screening.

Women considered to be at an increased risk will be invited for an appointment.