



# Physical symptoms of BREAST CANCER

The World Cancer Research Fund International reports that breast cancer is the second most common cancer across the globe, and the number one cancer in women. Nearly three million new cases of breast cancer in women are diagnosed around the world each year.

Breast cancer poses a notable threat to women's health, but research and resulting advancements in treatment have made the disease more treatable than ever. Women also can play a part in ensuring better outcomes in relation to breast cancer by educating themselves about the disease, including its warning signs. The MD Anderson Cancer Center notes that most changes to the breast are a byproduct of hormonal cycles or conditions that are not as formidable as breast cancer. So women should not jump to any conclusions when spotting such changes. However, the MDACC recommends women visit their physicians if they notice any of the following signs and symptoms of breast cancer.

- **Lump:** The MDACC notes that a lump in the breast or armpit is the most common symptom of breast cancer. Echoing assertions made by the MDACC, the American

Cancer Society notes that most breast lumps are not cancerous. The ACS indicates a lump that is a painless, hard mass with irregular edges is more likely to be cancer, though cancerous lumps also can be soft, round, tender, or even painful. The lack of uniformity regarding cancerous lumps is one reason why it pays for women to be extra cautious and immediately report any abnormalities in the shape and feel of their breasts to their physicians.

- **Swelling:** The ACS notes that some women with breast cancer will experience swelling of all or part of a breast even if they do not feel a lump.

- **Dimpling:** The MDACC reports that women with breast cancer may notice dimpling or puckering on the breast. According to the ACS, the dimpling can sometimes make the breast look like an orange peel.

- **Nipple retraction:** The National Cancer Institute notes that nipple retraction occurs when a nipple turns inward into the breast or lies flat against the breast. Though nipple retraction can be a sign of breast cancer, the NCI notes that's not necessarily the case for all women. Some women experience nipple retraction due to aging, breastfeeding, injury, infection, surgery, or certain conditions of

the breast.

- **Changes to the skin around the breast:** The ACS notes some women with breast cancer experience redness on the skin around the breast or on the nipple. Additional changes may include dry, flaking or thickened skin around the breast and nipple.

- **Discharge from the nipple:** The Mayo Clinic notes that it's normal to experience discharge from the nipple while pregnant and during breastfeeding. However, fluid coming out the nipple when a woman is not pregnant or breastfeeding could be a symptom of breast cancer.

- **Additional symptoms:** The MDACC notes scaliness on the nipple that sometimes extends to the areola is another warning sign of breast cancer. The ACS also reports that swollen lymph nodes under the arm or near the collar bone can indicate that breast cancer has spread even before the original tumor in the breast has been felt.

Breast cancer is a formidable yet treatable disease. Women who recognize any signs and symptoms associated with breast cancer are urged to contact their physicians immediately.

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