

Familial Breast Cancer

Standard Information for Patients where no specialist referral deemed necessary.

You have visited your GP today as you have concerns over your increased risk of breast cancer due to family history.

Inspecting the family history provided by you, your GP has decided that you do not have a significant 'familial' increased risk. If you subsequently discover that other family members have been affected by breast or ovarian cancer, then your level of risk may have increased. This should prompt you to make another appointment with your GP to review your case further. Most breast cancers are not hereditary, therefore most people whose mother has breast cancer, but with no further incidents in the family, will not be at any significantly increased risk. Even if there are two affected family members the risk may not be increased significantly because they are on different sides of the family or were affected at relatively old ages.

General population risk in the UK is around 1 in 10 lifetime risk. Everyone should be breast aware, the DoH policy below.

Your practice nurse should be able to help you.

What should a breast look and feel like?

There is no such thing as a standard breast and what is normal for one woman may not be for another. One woman's breasts will also look and feel different over time depending on the time of the month and the age of the woman.

What about routine self examination?

The Department of Health's policy on breast awareness, which has strong support from the nursing and medical professions, encourages women to check their breasts for what is normal for them but does not recommend routine self examination to a set technique.

Lifestyle plays a relatively large part in risk of most cancers. In breast cancer being overweight after the menopause is a known risk factor for breast and other cancers. Long term use of combined oestrogen progesterone HRT is a known risk factor for breast cancer and your GP will usually review your use of this after 2 years if you are over 50 years of age.

Observing a healthy diet, keeping fit, limiting alcohol intake, and having children early are all helpful in offering protection. Breast feeding for a prolonged period may also help. If you still have concerns, or would like help in tracing your family history further, the Hereditary Breast Cancer Helpline (open 24 hours) can offer assistance. 01629 813000

www.breastcancergenetics.co.uk

Breast Cancer Care provide useful information on breast awareness freephone 0808 800 6000 Monday-Friday 9AM- 5PM www.breastcancercare.co.uk