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Do you have breast cancer in your family?

This information sheet is to help women work out if they have an increased chance of developing breast cancer because of a family history of the disease and if so what they can do.

This information is adapted from 'Advice about familial aspects of breast cancer and ovarian cancer – a guide for health professionals' (iSource National Breast Cancer Centre).

A questionnaire about risk based on breast cancer family history is included – this is only for women without a personal history of breast cancer.

Please see the flip side of this pad for information for women about breast changes.



DO YOU HAVE BREAST CANCER IN YOUR FAMILY?

This information sheet is to help you work out if you have an increased chance of developing breast cancer and if so what you can do.

The information is based on what we know through research.



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Most breast cancer is not inherited

Breast cancer is a common disease: about 1 in 11 women in Australia will develop breast cancer by age 75. As a result, many women have a relative with breast cancer – simply by chance. Some women have a strong family history of breast cancer, for example several close blood relatives on the same side of the family who have the disease. These women may have inherited a fault in a gene which may eventually lead to the development of breast cancer. However, this is uncommon and less than 5% of all breast cancers are caused by an inherited gene fault. And although a woman who inherits a gene fault does have an increased chance of developing breast cancer, she may never develop the disease.

Your family history becomes more important in increasing your risk of breast cancer:

- The more blood relatives you have on the same side of the family who have had breast cancer
- The younger these relatives were when they were first diagnosed
- The more closely related these relatives are to you

How do I find out if I may have an increased risk of developing breast cancer?

You may like to complete the tick-box questions over the page. Based on your family history, you will be in one of these three categories:

Category 1 – Population Risk

If the current history of breast cancer in your close relatives puts you in this category, or if you have no relatives with breast cancer, your risk of breast cancer is about the same as that of the great majority of women in the general population. At the present time, you do not need to do anything more than any other woman in the population. Like all women, you are advised to:

- See your general practitioner without undue delay about any breast changes which are not normal for you
- Ask your general practitioner about how often you should have your breasts examined
- If you are over 50, ring 13 20 50 for a free screening mammogram with BreastScreen every two years

Category 2 – Moderately Increased Risk or Category 3 – Potentially High Risk

If the current history of breast cancer in your close relatives puts you in these categories, you may have an increased risk of developing breast cancer. You will be in either Category 2 (Moderately Increased Risk) or in Category 3 (Potentially High Risk). Make an appointment to see your general practitioner to find out which of these two categories you are in according to *Advice about familial aspects of breast cancer and ovarian cancer – A guide for health professionals*. More information about each of these two categories is given below:

Category 2 – Moderately Increased Risk:

Although women in this group have a moderately increased risk of developing breast cancer compared with women in the general population, 75 – 90% will not get breast cancer at any time in their life.

- See your general practitioner without undue delay about any breast changes which are not normal for you
- Your general practitioner will advise you about how often you should be having mammograms and breast examinations

- If you think you need a more precise risk assessment, your general practitioner can consult a specialist cancer service or a family cancer clinic and can discuss their advice with you

Category 3 – Potentially High Risk:

Although women in this group have a potentially high risk of developing breast cancer compared with women in the general population, 50 – 75% will not get breast cancer at any time in their life.

- See your general practitioner without undue delay about any new breast changes which are not normal for you
- Your general practitioner may refer you to a cancer specialist. The specialist will help to plan how often you should be having mammograms and breast examinations, and will advise you about any other examinations that you may need to have
- If you want more information about your risk or that of your family, your doctor may refer you to a family cancer clinic for advice, appropriate counselling, management and genetic testing if it is appropriate for you

QUESTIONS ABOUT BREAST CANCER IN YOUR FAMILY

You can find out if you may have an increased risk of developing breast cancer by completing the tick-box questions below. You will be in either **Category 1 (Population Risk)** or in **Category 2/3 (Moderately Increased Risk/Potentially High Risk)**. These categories are described on the reverse side of this page.

Instructions:

- *Please tell us about your blood relatives, your mother, sisters and daughters, and your grandmothers, aunts and nieces on both your mother's and your father's sides of the family.*
- *Please tick the answers below that are most appropriate to your family.*
- *If you are unsure of the answer, please tick NO or DON'T KNOW*

1. Have any of these blood relatives – your mother, sisters, daughters, grandmothers, aunts and nieces – ever had breast cancer?

Yes Go to question 2.

No or don't know Go to **Category 1** over the page and **DO NOT** answer any more questions.

2. Have any of your mother, sisters or daughters – ever had breast cancer?

Yes Go to question 3.

No or don't know Go to question 5 and **DO NOT** answer questions 3 or 4.

3. Were any of the women in question 2 diagnosed with breast cancer before the age of 50?

Yes before 50 Go to **Category 2/3** over the page and **DO NOT** answer any more questions.

No or don't know Go to question 4.

4. How many women in question 2 have had breast cancer?

One only Go to question 5.

Two or more Go to **Category 2/3** over the page and **DO NOT** answer any more questions.

5. Have any of these blood relatives – your grandmothers, aunts or nieces, on either your mother's or your father's sides of the family – ever had breast cancer?

Yes Go to question 6.

No or don't know Go to **Category 1** over the page and **DO NOT** answer any more questions.

6. Please tick ONE of the following statements that describes your blood relatives – your mother, sisters, grandmothers, aunts and nieces – who have ever had breast cancer:

I have one blood relative who has had breast cancer Go to **Category 1** over the page.

I have one blood relative on each side of my family who have had breast cancer Go to **Category 1** over the page.

I have two or more blood relatives on my mother's side who have had breast cancer Go to **Category 2/3** over the page.
Note: daughters and sisters can be counted on either side of the family.

I have two or more blood relatives on my father's side who have had breast cancer Go to **Category 2/3** over the page.
Note: daughters and sisters can be counted on either side of the family.