

# Exploring your family history of breast cancer

## Information your doctor will need

### Quick facts

- If you are concerned about your family history of cancer, speak to your GP (or breast care team if you are currently being treated for breast cancer).
- Take with you information about the cancers in your family, including which relatives have had cancer, where in their body it started and their age when diagnosed.
- If your doctor believes your family history might put you at increased risk of developing breast cancer, they can refer you to a specialist to look into this.

### What is a family history of breast cancer?

Most cases of breast cancer are not related to an increased risk in the family.



However, about one in 10 women with breast cancer have a significant family history of the disease. At least one in 10 men with breast cancer have a family history too.

If there are a number of people in your family with breast or ovarian cancer or if relatives were diagnosed with breast cancer at a young age (eg under 40), this may indicate that there is an increased risk that you or others in your family will develop the disease. It doesn't mean you will definitely get breast cancer, but it may mean it is more likely than for people without a family history.

Some gene faults (called BRCA1 and BRCA2) that increase breast cancer risk can also increase the risk of some ovarian cancers, which is why we mention both cancers above.

## Who to see if you have concerns about cancers in your family

If you have concerns about any cancers in your family, you should see your GP. If you are currently receiving treatment for breast cancer, your breast care team at the hospital can help you.

Your doctor will ask about any cancers in blood relatives, work out whether your family history suggests you may be at increased risk of breast cancer and, if so, refer you to a specialist. Both men and women can be referred to specialist services.

## Information to take with you

Your doctor will want to know the following information about any of your first degree relatives (your parents, sisters, brothers and children) and second degree relatives (your grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, any half-brothers or half-sisters and grandchildren) diagnosed with cancer:

### For each relative who has had or currently has cancer:

- Where in their body the cancer started
- Their age when first diagnosed with cancer

## About Breast Cancer Now

We're Breast Cancer Now, the UK's largest breast cancer charity – and we're dedicated to funding research into this devastating disease. We believe that if we all act now, by 2050, everyone who develops breast cancer will live. Join us at [breastcancernow.org](http://breastcancernow.org)

This leaflet is based on up-to-date research evidence and aims to give the best information available. All information was reviewed by appropriate experts and members of the public. We advise readers with concerns about breast cancer to discuss them with a health professional.

If you would like more information about the sources of evidence on which this publication is based, please contact [info@breastcancernow.org](mailto:info@breastcancernow.org) or call 08080 100 200.

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## They may also ask you for information about:

- Whether any relatives have had more than one cancer (which could include cancer in both breasts).
- Whether your family has any Jewish ancestry (this is relevant because faulty genes that increase breast cancer risk are more common in people with Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry).

Your assessment will be based on the information you give your doctor, so be as accurate as you can. Don't worry if you are unable to find out all this information – just do your best.

Talking to your family before your appointment may help you get the best picture possible of your family's history of cancer.

If more relatives are diagnosed with cancer in the future your assessment may change, so remember to keep your doctor updated.

## Breast Cancer Now

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## [breastcancernow.org](http://breastcancernow.org)

We welcome feedback. Please email comments to [info@breastcancernow.org](mailto:info@breastcancernow.org)

This pdf is part of a larger web guide by Breast Cancer Now. For more, see [familyhistory.breastcancernow.org](http://familyhistory.breastcancernow.org) or call Freephone **08080 100 200**.



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