



CANCER AUSTRALIA

Breast Cancer

Definition

- Breast cancer occurs when cells in the ducts or lobules of the breast grow abnormally and multiply, and form growths called cancers. Non-invasive breast cancer is when the cancer cells remain in the ducts and lobules of the breast and have not spread. Invasive breast cancer is when the cancer cells spread beyond the ducts and lobules into the surrounding tissue.

Incidence

- Breast cancer is the most common cancer among Australian women, accounting for 27% of all cancer diagnoses in 2007.¹
- The number of women diagnosed with breast cancer in Australia increased from 5291 in 1982 to 12,567 in 2007.¹
- One in nine women will be diagnosed with breast cancer before the age of 85.^{1,2}
- By 2015, the number of new breast cancer cases among women is projected to be 22% higher than in 2006, with an estimated 15,409 women expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer.²
- Breast cancer is the most common cancer experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.²
- The risk of breast cancer increases with age. About 24% of new breast cancer cases diagnosed in 2007 were in women younger than 50 years; 51% in women aged 50-69; and 25% in women aged 70 and over.³
- The age-standardised incidence rate has increased from 80.8 in 1982 to 109.2 in 2007.¹
- The number of men diagnosed with breast cancer in Australia increased from 62 in 1982 to 103 in 2007.¹

Mortality

- Breast cancer and lung cancer are the two leading causes of cancer-related death in Australian women. There were 2,680 female deaths and 26 male deaths from breast cancer in 2007.¹
- The age-standardised rate of death due to breast cancer among women has decreased by 27% from 1994 to 2007.²
- Mortality rates for Indigenous women were not significantly different from those of their non-Indigenous counterparts between 2003-2007.¹
- Australia's death rate from breast cancer was significantly lower than the rates for New Zealand, Northern Europe, Western Europe and Western Africa.²

Survival

- For women, the five-year relative survival after diagnosis of breast cancer has increased from 72.6% in 1982-1987 to 88.3% in 2000-2006.²
- In 2006 five-year relative survival was 98.2% for women with 0–10 mm tumours, 94.7% for women with 11–15 mm tumours, 93% for women with 16–19 mm tumours, 87.9% for women with 20–29 mm tumours, 73.1% for women with tumours 30 mm or greater.²
- Five-year crude survival rates for Indigenous women in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Northern Territory were significantly lower compared with non-Indigenous women (65% vs. 82% respectively) between 2002-2006.²

Prevalence

- It is estimated that in 2006 there were 143,967 Australian women alive who had been diagnosed with breast cancer in the previous 25 years.²

Burden of disease

- Breast cancer was the leading cancer cause of burden of disease for females, accounting for 61,100 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) (40,600 years of life lost due to premature death and 20,500 years of healthy life lost due to disease, disability or injury) in 2010.¹

Risk factors

- Gender, age and family history are the key risk factors for breast cancer.
- For further information on specific breast cancer risk factors, see: *Breast cancer risk factors: a review of the evidence*: <http://canceraustralia.nbocc.org.au/view-document-details/rfrw-breast-cancer-risk-factors-a-review-of-the-evidence>
- To calculate your breast cancer risk, visit: <http://canceraustralia.nbocc.org.au/risk>

References

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & Australasian Association of Cancer Registries 2010. Cancer in Australia: an overview, 2010. Cancer series no. 60. Cat. no. CAN 56. Canberra: AIHW.
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre 2009. Breast cancer in Australia: an overview, 2009. Cancer series no. 50. Cat. no. CAN 46. Canberra: AIHW.
3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2010. ACIM (Australian Cancer Incidence and Mortality) Books. AIHW: Canberra

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