

# GUIDELINES FOR THE

# “Girls”



It was Eleanor Roosevelt who said, “You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face.” Today is the day we stare down **breast cancer** and decide that we are stronger, we are smarter, and we will *never* live in denial about our health. Of course, it won’t be easy. Breast cancer poses a threat to nearly every woman in every corner of the

United States. Many of us can name friends and family affected by the disease. Fortunately, with early screenings and medical research, breast cancer is no longer a sudden discovery with little hope of recovery. We are the privileged ones. We now know how to take charge over our breast health by taking time to protect the “girls.”

**BREASTS: No two are alike, that's for sure. From training bras to breast feeding to menopause and beyond, breasts show up in some of our most awkward years and change throughout our lives. Wear your girls with pride – and in good health!**

Breast cancer prevention begins with healthy habits — you can beat the odds by being physically active, limiting alcohol intake and eating food that nourishes your body. Just like life in general, with breast cancer, there are some things in your control and some things that are out of your hands entirely. Here's a list of potential risk factors to be on the lookout for:

-  Being female
-  Increased risk after age 40
-  Personal medical history
-  Family medical history
-  Caucasian descent
-  Dense breast tissue
-  History of taking DES medication
-  Poor lifestyle habits

Healthy living, knowing your risks, and getting screened often will keep breast cancer at bay. According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, in 2010, there were more than **2.5 million breast cancer survivors** in the United States. They make up an army of advocates who have proven to be formidable opponents against the disease.

Mammograms Made Easy: St. Luke's Hospital offers the latest in digital mammography, including the convenience of walk-in screening mammograms, at 5 locations. Visit [www.stlukes-stl.com](http://www.stlukes-stl.com) for details.

St. Luke's breast health services network also offers ultrasound, breast MRI, CT, biopsy and breast aspiration, SonoCiné exam for dense breasts and breast cancer risk assessments, as well as a full range of treatment options.

Both men and women should recognize the signs and symptoms of breast cancer. If you find yourself with any of the symptoms listed below, contact your local Spirit of Women physician right away.

**Common symptoms (in both men and women):**

-  Lumps, hard knots or thickening
-  Dimpling or puckering of the skin
-  Changes to your nipple, such as redness, scaling or a nipple that turns inward
-  Nipple discharge that starts suddenly

**Common symptoms (in women only):**

-  Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening
-  Change in the size or shape of the breast
-  Itchy, scaly sore or a rash on the nipple
-  Pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast
-  New pain in one spot that doesn't go away

Aside from lifestyle changes, the **MOST IMPORTANT ACTION** a woman can take is to follow early detection guidelines. According to the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, breast cancer can be more effectively treated when caught in the earlier stages. Screenings have even been shown to reduce mortality rates.

Below is a list of screenings you should take advantage of to *protect your girls*:

1. *Clinical Breast Exam (CBE)* is when the doctor looks at and feels the breasts and under the arms for anything unusual, including lumps.
2. *Mammograms* are X-ray images of the breast used to check for breast cancer in women who have no signs or symptoms of the disease.
  - *Film Screen Mammograms* use X-rays to produce an image of the breast. The image is created directly on a film; it is less sensitive for women who have dense breasts.
  - *Digital Mammograms* expose women to a lesser dosage of radiation and are seen to be more accurate in women under the age of 50, women with radiographically dense breasts, and premenopausal women.
3. *Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)* uses a magnet, radio waves, and a computer to make a series of detailed pictures of areas inside the body. It is suggested for women with a greater than 20% lifetime risk of developing breast cancer, family history of breast or ovarian cancer, and women who have been treated for Hodgkin's lymphoma.
4. *Ultrasounds* use sound waves to produce images. The image may show whether a lump is solid, filled with fluid, or a mixture of both.

**EVERYONE** can be susceptible to breast cancer, especially women, but you don't have to fall victim to it. Check with your local Spirit of Women hospital for the latest *Guidelines for the "Girls."* We are learning more every day so that we can save one more mother, sister, daughter or wife from breast cancer.

**SOURCES:**

[Breastcancer.org](http://Breastcancer.org), [US Preventative Services Task Force](http://US Preventative Services Task Force), [National Cancer Institute](http://National Cancer Institute), [American Cancer Society](http://American Cancer Society), [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) [National Breast Cancer Foundation](http://National Breast Cancer Foundation)