

Breast

Breast cancer risk after childhood cancer treatment

Background

Some of the treatments used to treat childhood cancer can affect breast tissue. These treatments may:

- affect the way your breasts grow
- affect your ability to breast feed after having a baby
- increase the risk of developing breast cancer throughout your life, when compared to women the same age as you in the general population.

Who is at risk?

The risk of breast cancer is largely related to radiotherapy treatment and in particular the amount of breast tissue treated and the dose of radiotherapy received. People treated with higher doses of radiation to larger volumes of breast tissue have the highest risk.

Other known risk factors include:

- age
- hormonal causes:
 - periods starting before the age of 12
 - late menopause (after age 55)
 - never having a baby or having a first baby after the age of 30
 - use of contraceptive pill and/or HRT
- having a close relative with breast cancer and/or breast cancer genes
- high fat diet and obesity
- lifestyle factors

How is it diagnosed?

If a woman develops breast cancer following radiotherapy to breast tissue, it may happen at a younger age than in women who develop breast cancer (usually age 50 or older). For this reason, some women will be invited to commence breast cancer screening at an earlier age than normal (from age 25-30 years). You will be informed if this is advisable for you.

Published in conjunction with Aftercure: A guide for teenage and young adult survivors of childhood cancer

www.aftercure.org



What can I do?

- **Be breast aware:**
 - know what is normal for your breasts
 - know what changes to look for (a lump, skin or nipple change)
 - look at and feel your breasts regularly
 - report any changes to your doctor without delay
- **Ask your clinical team** about your individual risk, options for screening and other treatments and attend for breast screening when advised to do so.
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking increases the risk of many cancers including breast cancer.
- Watch your **diet and weight** in particular avoid a high fat diet. Being overweight increases your risk when older.
- Watch your **alcohol** intake. Too much increases your risk.
- **Exercise.** This reduces your risk of breast cancer.
- **Breastfeed** if you can.
- Discuss **contraception and HRT** with your oncologist if relevant.
- If you come from a family with a **genetic** type of breast cancer, you should be referred to a genetic clinic.

Where can I find out more information?

Breast Cancer Care has a helpful website and the sections 'breast m8s' and 'FAQs' are particularly relevant to young people concerned about any breast issues.

www.breastcancercare.org.uk

For more information on the risks and what you can do about them see the Cancer Research UK website

www.cancerresearchuk.org

Coppafeel runs a breast awareness website with explanations on how to check for changes in your breasts:

www.coppafeel.org/boob-check

www.aftercure.org

The full range of factsheets for childhood and teenage cancer survivors are available on the CCLG and Aftercure website in conjunction with CCLG's booklet entitled 'Aftercure: A guide for teenage and young adult survivors of childhood cancer'.



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Registered charity number 286669



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© CCLG 2016
Published by CCLG January 2016
Next review date: January 2019

Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group is a leading children's cancer charity and the UK and Ireland's professional association for those involved in the treatment and care of children with cancer. Each week in the UK and Ireland, more than 30 children are diagnosed. Two out of ten children will not survive their disease.

We bring together childhood cancer professionals to ensure all children receive the best possible treatment and care. We fund and support research into childhood cancers, and we help young patients and their families with our expert, high quality and award-winning information resources.

If you have any comments on this factsheet, please contact us.

CCLG publications on a variety of topics related to children's cancer are available to order or download free of charge from our website.