

Breast cancer Symptoms and Types

Symptoms of breast cancer vary from person to person. Some common breast cancer signs and symptoms include:

- Skin changes, such as swelling, redness, or other visible differences in one or both breasts
- An increase in size or change in shape of the breast(s)
- Changes in the appearance of one or both nipples
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk
- General pain in/on any part of the breast
- Lumps or nodes felt on or inside of the breast

Symptoms more specific to invasive breast cancer are as follows:

- Irritated or itchy breasts
- Change in breast color
- Increase in breast size or shape (over a short period of time)
- Changes in touch (may feel hard, tender or warm)
- Peeling or flaking of the nipple skin
- A breast lump or thickening
- Redness or pitting of the breast skin (like the skin of an orange)

Types of breast cancer

Breast cancer occurs in two broad categories: noninvasive and invasive.

Noninvasive (in situ) breast cancer: Cancerous cells remain in a particular location of the breast, without spreading to surrounding tissue, lobules or ducts.

Invasive (infiltrating) breast cancer: Cancerous cells break through normal breast tissue barriers and spread to other parts of the body through the bloodstream and lymph nodes.

Breast cancer is also classified based on where in the breast the disease started (e.g., milk ducts, lobules), how the disease grows, and other factors.

There are two main types of invasive breast cancer:

- **Invasive ductal carcinoma (IDC):** IDC begins in the milk ducts and accounts for 70 percent or more of invasive breast cancers.
- **Invasive lobular carcinoma (ILC):** ILC begins in the lobules and is rarer. Sometimes, the origin of the tumor may not be known.

Inflammatory breast cancer (IBC) is a unique type of breast cancer that often starts within the soft tissues of the breast and causes the lymph vessels in the skin of the breast to become blocked. As a result, the breast can become firm, tender, itchy, red, and warm due to increased blood flow and a build-up of white blood cells.

Metastatic breast cancer occurs when cancer cells spread to another part of the body. Breast cancer can be metastatic at the time of diagnosis, or following treatment. Cancer cells can travel through the bloodstream, lymph nodes and spread to other organs and parts of the body.

Papillary carcinoma is a rare type of breast cancer, accounting for about three percent of all breast cancers. Papillary carcinoma typically has a better prognosis than other, more common breast cancers.

Triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC) is where the cancer cells do not contain receptors for estrogen, progesterone, or HER2. About 10 – 20 percent of all breast cancers are triple-negative. This type of breast cancer is usually invasive and usually begins in the breast ducts.

Research shows that TNBC affects certain populations of women more than others; it is more common in African American women, younger women, and women who carry a BRCA1 gene mutation. Women of African descent are up to three times more likely to be diagnosed with TNBC, than Caucasian or Hispanic women. In addition, TNBC in African American women tends to be more aggressive, is diagnosed at a later stage, and carries poorer survival outcomes compared to Caucasian women.

Some other types of breast cancer include, but are not limited to *Paget's disease of the nipple, sarcoma of the breast, medullary carcinoma, tubular carcinoma, mucinous carcinoma, metaplastic carcinoma, adenocystic carcinoma, phyllodes tumor and angiosarcoma.*