

THE TRUTH ABOUT BREAST CANCER

Separating Fact From Fiction Could Save Your Life

► by Helen Pass, MD, FACS, Co-Director of the Stamford Health Breast Center and Chief of Breast Surgery at Stamford Hospital ◀

About Helen Pass, MD, FACS

Dr. Pass is the Co-Director of the Stamford Health Breast Center and Chief of Breast Surgery at Stamford Hospital. She is the past president and prior chairman of the board of the American Society of Breast Surgeons. Dr. Pass has been named a "Top Doctor" in numerous publications for the past decade.

She has received many honors and accolades, including an award from the American College of Surgeons and a Patient's Choice Award from Vitals.com.



Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women. A woman's risk increases beginning at age 40 and continues to rise with time. When found early, breast cancer is easier to treat successfully, yet it is common for women to put off scheduling mammograms.

► Knowing your individual risk considerations and taking control of your health could save your life. Here are a few common misconceptions about breast cancer and why learning the truth is so important.

MYTH Only people with a family history of cancer are at risk for breast cancer.

1 There is a 1 in 8 chance that a woman will develop breast cancer in her lifetime. It's important to know that most women who get breast cancer **do not** have a family history of the disease. Only about 5% to 10% of breast cancer cases result from gene mutations passed on from a parent, so even if you do not have a family history of breast cancer, screening is important.

MYTH My mammogram was clear last year, so I don't need one this year.

2 Since the best way to protect yourself from breast cancer is to find it early, it's important to be proactive about your health and get a mammogram every year. Some breast cancers grow and spread quickly and others more slowly. No one can predict how one specific cancer will behave.

MYTH I'm very healthy, so I don't need to get a mammogram at 40.

3 A woman at average risk (meaning she doesn't have a personal or family history of breast cancer or a genetic mutation known to increase her risk of breast cancer) should begin annual mammogram screening at age 40. Regular mammograms can help to find breast cancer at an early stage and can spot breast changes before physical cancer symptoms develop.

► If you may be at greater risk for developing breast cancer, talk to your doctor about the age you should start screening. It may be beneficial for you to start annual mammograms *before* age 40. At Stamford Health we make sure that you're comfortable with every aspect of your breast health. That's why we offer free mammography exams for those who are uninsured or whose insurance does not cover breast cancer screening and who meet certain qualifications. For your convenience, Stamford Health also offers evening and weekend appointments.

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