

Road to **WELLfluent**TM

Embrace better health.

CAN I LOWER MY RISK OF BREAST CANCER?

There is no sure way to prevent breast cancer. But there are things you can do that might lower your risk. While many risk factors are beyond your control, such as being female and getting older, other risk factors can be decreased. For women who are known to be at increased risk for breast cancer, there are additional steps you can take that might reduce the risk of developing breast cancer.

For all women

Get to and stay at a healthy weight: Both increased body weight and weight gain as an adult are linked with a higher risk of breast cancer after menopause. The American Cancer Society recommends you stay at a healthy weight throughout your life and avoid excess weight gain by balancing your food intake with physical activity.

Be physically active: Many studies have shown that moderate to vigorous physical activity is linked with lower breast cancer risk, so it's important to get regular physical activity. The American Cancer Society recommends that adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity each week (or a combination of these), preferably spread throughout the week.

- **Moderate activity** is anything that makes you breathe as hard as you do during a brisk walk. It causes a slight increase in heart rate and breathing. You should be able to talk, but not sing during the activity.
- **Vigorous activities** are performed at a higher intensity. They cause an increased heart rate, sweating, and a faster breathing rate.

Activities that improve strength and flexibility, such as weight lifting, stretching, or yoga, are also beneficial.

Limit or avoid alcohol: Alcohol also increases the risk of breast cancer. Even low levels of alcohol intake have been linked with an increase in risk. The American Cancer Society recommends that women who drink have no more than 1 alcoholic drink a day. A drink is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits (hard liquor).



Avoid Smoking: According to breastcancer.org, smoking causes a number of diseases and is linked to a higher risk of breast cancer in younger, premenopausal women. Research also has shown that there may be link between very heavy second-hand smoke exposure and breast cancer risk in postmenopausal women.

Smoking also can increase complications from breast cancer treatment, including:

- damage to the lungs from radiation therapy
- difficulty healing after surgery and breast reconstruction
- higher risk of blood clots when taking hormonal therapy medicines

If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, use every resource you can find to help you quit. Knowing about all of the problems associated with smoking isn't always enough to make you quit. Smoking is a habit that's very hard to break. Fortunately, if you're serious about trying, you have lots of help.

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Is there a link between diet/vitamins and breast cancer risk?

The possible link between diet and breast cancer risk is not clear, but this is an active area of study. A diet that is rich in vegetables, fruit, poultry, fish, and low-fat dairy products has been linked with a lower risk of breast cancer in some studies. But it is not clear if specific vegetables, fruits, or other foods can lower risk. And most studies have not found that lowering fat intake has much of an effect on breast cancer risk. But this does not mean that there's no point in eating a healthy diet. A diet low in fat, low in processed foods and red meat, and high in fruits and vegetables, can clearly have other health benefits, including lowering the risk of some other cancers. So far, no study has shown that taking vitamins or other supplements reduces the risk of breast cancer.

For more on the links between body weight, physical activity, diet, and breast cancer (as well as other cancers), see American Cancer Society Guidelines on Nutrition and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention.

Other factors that might lower risk: Women who choose to breastfeed for at least several months may also get an added benefit of reducing their breast cancer risk.

Avoid unnecessary hormone therapy

Using hormone therapy after menopause can increase your risk of breast cancer. To avoid this, talk to your health care provider about non-hormonal options to treat menopausal symptoms. Based on the WHI study, taking estrogen-progestin therapy (EPT) is linked to a higher risk of breast cancer. The longer EPT is used, the higher the risk. Breast cancers in women taking EPT are more likely to be found when they are bigger and have spread beyond the breast. To put the risk into numbers, if 10,000 women took EPT for a year, it would result in up to about 8 more cases of breast cancer per year than if they had not taken hormone therapy (HT). Taking EPT is also linked to increased breast density (as seen on a mammogram). Increased breast density can make it harder to find breast cancer on a mammogram. Within 3 years of stopping the hormones, the risk returns to that of a woman who never used EPT (the usual risk).

For women at increased risk of breast cancer

If you are a woman at increased risk for breast cancer, for instance, because you have a strong family history of breast cancer, or a known gene mutation that increases breast cancer risk, such as in

the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, there may be some things you can do to help lower your chances of developing it. Your health care provider can help you determine your risk of breast cancer, as well as which, if any, of these options might be right for you.

Medicines to lower breast cancer risk

Prescription medicines can be used to help lower breast cancer risk in certain women at increased risk of breast cancer.

Medicines such as tamoxifen and raloxifene block the action of estrogen in breast tissue. Tamoxifen can be taken even if you haven't gone through menopause, while raloxifene is only used for women who have gone through menopause. Other drugs, called aromatase inhibitors, might also be an option for women past menopause. All of these medicines can also have side effects, so it's important to understand the possible benefits and risks of taking one of them.

Preventive surgery for women with very high breast cancer risk

For the small fraction of women who have a very high risk for breast cancer, surgery to remove the breasts may be an option. Another option might be to remove the ovaries, which are the main source of estrogen in the body. While surgery can lower the risk of breast cancer, it can't eliminate it completely, and it can come with its own side effects.

Before deciding which, if any, of these options might be right for you, talk with your health care provider to understand your risk of breast cancer and how much any of these approaches might lower this risk.

For women at increased breast cancer risk who don't want to take medicines or have surgery, another option is to have more frequent doctor visits and tests to look for breast cancer. This is sometimes referred to as **close observation**. While this approach doesn't lower breast cancer risk, it might help find it early, when it's likely to be easier to treat.

Again, a forthright discussion with your healthcare provider is the best way to decide what is best for you.

Source: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/risk-and-prevention/can-i-lower-my-risk.html#references>

GLOBAL HANDWASHING DAY

Celebrate Global Handwashing Day to promote handwashing with soap in your community and around the world. Established by the Global Handwashing Partnership in 2008, Global Handwashing Day is celebrated each year on October 15 as a way to increase awareness and understanding of the benefits of handwashing with soap.

Handwashing is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Handwashing is especially important during key times, such as after using the bathroom or before preparing food. Washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu. In fact research shows that getting vaccinated can reduce your risk of catching the flu, reduce your symptoms and complications if you do get the flu, and reduce the chance of spreading the flu to others.

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/global-handwashing-day.html>



OCTOBER IS NATIONAL DEPRESSION AND MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING MONTH

World Mental Health Day is observed on October 10th every year, with the overall objective of raising awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilizing efforts in support of mental health. AvMed would like to encourage our Members to take mental health, including depression, as seriously as physical health.

Identifying Risk Factors in Depression

We all get a little down some days. But when those feelings start to linger, it's worth getting checked out. Depression affects millions of adults in the United States; the National Institute of Mental Health found that over 17 million adults in the U.S. have experienced at least one major depressive episode. In addition, according to the CDC, more than 1 in 20, or 2.6 million, U.S. children aged 6-17 years had anxiety or depression that had previously been diagnosed by a healthcare provider and this statistic is continuing to increase each year.

Without treatment, depression can drastically affect the way a person thinks, feels and interacts with others – and quality of life decreases significantly. Older adults, in particular, may chalk up their depression to getting older. But depression is not normal at any age.

Are you at risk for depression? Here are some of the risk factors:

Genetics: A family history puts you at a higher risk of developing depression.

Major Life Changes: The loss of a loved one, getting divorced or even having a new baby are just a few of the major events that can lead to increased stress and, in some cases, depression.

Other Illnesses: Sleep problems, chronic pain, approaching menopause, and other conditions can contribute to depression.

Fortunately, this is a medical condition that can get better with treatment. The key is to stick to your doctor's recommendations. Contact your Primary Care Physician (PCP) or Magellan Health for a depression assessment and the most appropriate treatment.

To treat depression, your doctor may suggest lifestyle changes (e.g., more exercise, new hobbies) along with medication. Keep the following in mind if you're prescribed antidepressants:

- Take the medication exactly as prescribed to get the full benefit from your treatment.
- After approximately four to six weeks of medication, you should begin to notice an effect on the relief of symptoms, but don't stop taking them just because you are feeling better. Most people need to stay on antidepressant medications for a full year before considering whether or not they can safely stop.



Should you have any concerns about your treatment, work with your Provider to find a solution. Some common concerns you might have:

"I don't think my medicine is working." Remember that some medicines don't work right away. It can take time before you start seeing the benefits so be patient.

"I'm worried about side effects." If side effects bother you, let your doctor know. He or she can prescribe another medication or suggest ways to reduce side effects.

You also have a wide range of depression resources at your disposal through Magellan Health, AvMed's behavioral health partner, including help with medication adherence. Another resource is the Magellan website, which is filled with tools and resources related to depression and other behavioral health concerns.

Case management services are also available. As a reminder, it is important to sign release of information forms to your primary care physician (PCP) whenever necessary so that your care can be coordinated appropriately.

You are not alone. To find out more about behavioral resources and find a local Provider, contact Magellan Health at **1-800-424-4810** (TTY 711), Monday-Friday 8 am-6 pm, or visit Magellan's website at **www.MagellanAssist.com**.

HALLOWEEN SAFETY ON AND OFF THE ROAD



Kids love the magic of Halloween: Trick-or-treating, classroom parties and trips to a neighborhood haunted house. But for moms and dads, often there is a fine line between Halloween fun and safety concerns, especially when it comes to road and pedestrian safety.

In 2017, 7,450 pedestrians died in traffic or non-traffic incidents on Halloween, according to Injury Facts. Non-traffic incidents include those occurring on driveways, in parking lots or on private property. NSC research reveals almost 18% of these deaths occurred at road crossings or intersections. Lack of visibility because of low lighting at night also plays a factor in these deaths.

Here's another scary statistic: Children are more than twice as likely to be hit by a car and killed on Halloween than on any other day of the year. In 2017, October ranked No. 2 in motor vehicle deaths by month, with 3,700. July was No. 1, with 3,830 deaths.

Costume Safety

To help ensure adults and children have a safe holiday, the American Academy of Pediatrics has compiled a list of Halloween safety tips. Before Halloween arrives, be sure to choose a costume that won't cause safety hazards. All costumes, wigs and accessories should be fire-resistant. Avoid masks, which can obstruct vision. If children are allowed out after dark, fasten reflective tape to their costumes and bags, or give them glow sticks. When buying Halloween makeup, make sure it is nontoxic and always test it in a small area first.

Remove all makeup before children go to bed to prevent skin and eye irritation.

When They're on the Prowl

A responsible adult should accompany young children on the neighborhood rounds. If your older children are going alone, plan and review a route acceptable to you. Agree on a specific time children should return home. Teach your children never to enter a stranger's home or car. Instruct children to travel only in familiar, well-lit areas and stick with their friends. Tell your children not to eat any treats until they return home. Children and adults are reminded to put electronic devices down, keep heads up and walk, don't run, across the street.

Safety Tips for Motorists

NSC offers these additional safety tips for parents – and anyone who plans to be on the road during trick-or-treat hours:

- Watch for children walking on roadways, medians and curbs
- Enter and exit driveways and alleys carefully
- At twilight and later in the evening, watch for children in dark clothing
- Discourage new, inexperienced drivers from driving on Halloween

Source: <https://www.nsc.org/home-safety/tools-resources/seasonal-safety/autumn/halloween>

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Date	Time	Event	Location	Description
Saturday, 10/5/19	7:30 am	Burger King Beach 10K/5K	Lummus Park, 901 Ocean Drive, Miami Beach, FL 33139-5013	The BURGER KING SM Beach Run is all about sand, sun and a run--all benefiting local students through scholarships! Runners begin with a unique course along beautiful South Beach and finish on the sand for a beach party. A Family Fun Zone, music, a BURGER KING [®] -themed sandcastle design, and more will keep the beach party going while the Hydration Station will refuel everyone after a day of fun in the sun. The real plus? All proceeds benefit local high school seniors through the BURGER KING SM Scholars program. http://teamfootworks.org/burger-king-beach-run/
Saturday, 10/5/19	9:00 am	The Great Inflatable Race	Jacksonville Equestrian Center, 13611 Normandy Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL 32221	The Great Inflatable Race is a fun run with inflatable obstacles spread throughout the running course. You and your friends will feel like kids again as you jump, dive and bounce on our custom-designed inflatables. Get fit, support a good cause and create epic memories that will last you a lifetime! https://www.thegreatinflatablerace.com/jacksonville
Saturday, 10/12/19	6:30 am	2019 Komen Miami/Ft. Lauderdale More than Pink Walk[®]	Bayfront Park - Downtown Miami, 301 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, FL 33132	This important annual event raises significant funds for the breast cancer movement, thanks to supporters and survivors around the world who step up and take action by fundraising for the cause. https://komenmiatl.org/event/walk/
Sunday, 10/13/19	7:00 am	Parkland Dash	Pine Trails Park, 10555 Trails End, Parkland, Florida	The annual Parkland Dash 5K/5 Mile and 1 Mile Fun Run benefiting the Arthritis Foundation. https://www.cityofparkland.org/843/Parkland-Dash-5K5Mile-RunWalk

*Note the CDC suggests staying cool. Making simple changes in your fluid intake, activities, and clothing can help you remain safe and healthy

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A Wellness Newsletter for AvMed Members

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