Breast Cancer Risk Above Average But Less than 20%

Because you have a family history of breast cancer, you are more likely to get breast cancer than a woman who does not have a family history. However, your risk is less than a woman with a hereditary cancer syndrome.

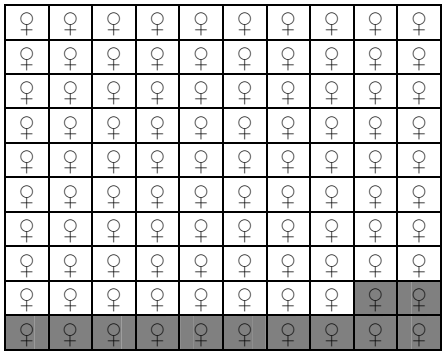
To help you understand what this means consider the following.

Average Risk

Every woman has a chance of getting breast cancer. In the U.S. the chance that a woman will get breast cancer in her life time is 12.5%.

This means that 1.2 women out of 10 will get breast cancer, or 12 women out of 100.

The darker squares represent women who will get breast cancer.

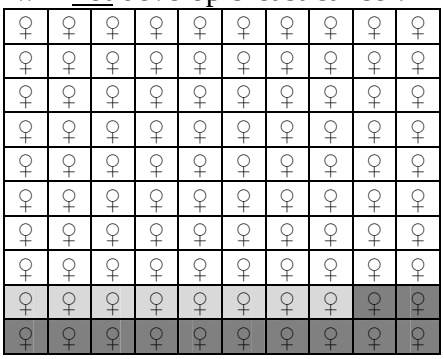


Your Risk

Based on your family history the chance that you will get breast cancer is between 13% and 20% (in the light gray area below).

This means that 1.3 to 2 women out of 10 will get breast cancer, or 13 to 20 out of 100.

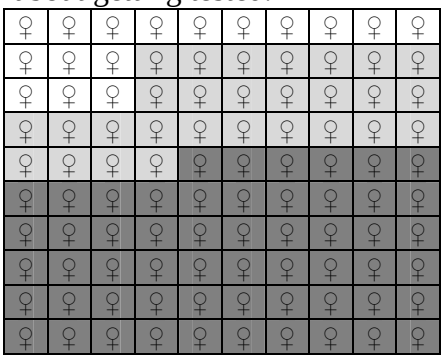
Even though your chance is higher, 8 out of 10 women at familial risk (or 80 out of 100) will not develop breast cancer.



Hereditary Risk

Only 1 in 300 to 1 in 500 women in the U.S. have a gene change that increases their chance of getting breast cancer. The chance that these women will get breast cancer is between 56% and 87%. Said another way, 56 to 87 women out of 100 will get cancer.

Women in this group should see a genetic counselor and think about getting tested.



While you cannot change your family history, there are **THINGS YOU CAN DO**.
To lower your chance of getting breast cancer you can:

- Exercise strenuously for more than 4 hours per week.
- Have a baby before you are 20-years-old.
- Breast-feed your babies.

You can also **AVOID** things that increase the chance of getting breast cancer. These include:

- Gaining a lot of weight after menopause. Women who weigh over 180 lbs are almost 3 times more likely to get breast cancer than women who weigh 129 lbs.
- Drinking more than four alcoholic drinks a day.
- Taking hormone replacement therapy that includes both estrogen and progesterone.

See your doctor. Regular screening for breast cancer makes it more likely that if you do get breast cancer it will be found early, when it is easier to treat.

- Have your doctor do a clinical breast exam every year beginning in your 20's or 30's
- Have a mammogram every year beginning at age 40. Even though you are more likely to get breast cancer, most women are diagnosed with breast cancer after age 40. This means you do not need to start screening early, unless you have symptoms.

To learn more about breast cancer and things you can do to lower your risk go to:
http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/prevention/breast/Patient
http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/BreastCancer/DetailedGuide/breast-cancer-risk-factors