

# Breast Exams

By Jenna Haines

## EXPERT ADVICE

### Know Your Risk

**R**egular breast cancer screening is important for all women, but even more so for those at higher risk. Women at higher risk will need to be screened earlier and more often. Factors that increase risk include:

- a mutation (or a first-degree relative with a mutation) in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, or the TP53 or PTEN genes
- a strong family history
- a personal history of breast cancer, ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS), lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS), or atypical hyperplasia
- previous radiation treatment to the chest area

Source: Susan G. Komen for the Cure



*Taking a  
Proactive  
Stance*

**T**he most important key to breast health is to stay ahead of the curve. If breast cancer is found early, there are more treatment options and a better chance for survival. Breast cancer screening tests consist of mammograms—X-rays of the breast used for early detection when lumps are too small to detect by hand, and clinical breast exams—a visual and physical examination of the breast by a health care provider. The American Cancer Society recommends that women between the ages of 20 and 39 get a clinical breast exam every three years; women who are 40 and older should get both a clinical breast exam and a mammogram every year.

While adhering to a strict checkup schedule will increase your chances of catching breast cancer early, you should also pay attention to specific symptoms that indicate trouble. Susan G. Komen for the Cure highlights some red flags:

- a lump, hard knot or thickening inside the breast or underarm area

- swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast
- change in the size or shape of the breast
- dimpling or puckering of the skin
- itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
- pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast
- nipple discharge that starts suddenly
- new pain in one spot that doesn't go away

For extra precaution, you can also perform self-exams. The American Cancer Society advises that you perform the test on the first day of your period, lying down, with the finger pads of the three middle fingers. Use three different levels of pressure—light, medium and firm—before moving on to the next spot. While self-exams are always a good idea, it is important to understand that they are not as effective as mammograms and clinical exams, and it may be harder for women with denser breasts to detect abnormalities. ♀

**17 Physicians**  
**11 Practices**  
**3 Regions**  
**1 Reason**



**Advanced Women's  
Health Specialists**  
423.778.8921

**Associates in  
Women's Health**  
423.899.0464 Chattanooga  
706.861.4508 Ringgold  
423.910.0896 Ooltewah

**Chattanooga Center  
for Women**  
423.648.6020

**Dr. John S. Adams,  
MD-OBGYN**  
423.648.6020

**Gynecologists  
Associated**  
423.756.0863 Chattanooga  
706.937.5200 Ringgold

**Premier Healthcare**  
423.648.7770

**University Women's  
Services**  
423.756.4796

**Women's Diagnostic  
Center**  
423.296.8171



**To better serve you.**

**We are WHS.**