Breast Cancer in Younger Women

Breast cancer may be far from your mind when you’re in your 20s, 30s and 40s. Life is busy with plans for your career, family, travel and more — and a diagnosis of breast cancer is definitely not part of the plan. Hearing the words “you have breast cancer” can be a shock.

Unique Challenges for Younger Women
Although breast cancer is more common in older women, nearly 1 in 10 women diagnosed with breast cancer are younger than age 45.* Younger women going through breast cancer diagnosis and treatment often have unique issues and can benefit from additional layers of support and care. Here’s why:

1. **Breast cancer in younger women is more likely to be hereditary.** Genetic testing and counseling can help women and their families work together to navigate breast cancer prevention.

2. **Breast cancer in younger women is more likely to be found at a later stage.** These cases are often more aggressive and difficult to treat. Focusing on early detection and a personalized treatment plan are critical steps in the fight against breast cancer.

3. **Younger women dealing with breast cancer often have unique issues.** This may include special concerns about breast surgery and reconstruction, body image, fertility and more. Working with a care team you trust is essential when navigating the complexities of cancer treatment.

Are You at Risk?
Knowing your risk for breast cancer can lead to important discussions with your doctor about breast cancer screening, genetic testing and other preventive measures. If you’re age 45 or younger, your risk for breast cancer may be higher if you have:

- **Family history of breast cancer.** Having close relatives who were diagnosed with breast cancer before age 45 or diagnosed with ovarian cancer at any age.
- **Genetic risk.** Having breast cancer genes BRCA1 and BRCA2 show up in genetic testing for yourself or close relatives.
- **Race/ethnicity.** Having Ashkenazi Jewish heritage increases your risk for breast cancer.
- **Past radiation therapy.** Receiving radiation therapy to the breast or chest during childhood or early adulthood.
- **High breast density.** Having dense breast tissue may increase your breast cancer risk.

Is It Breast Cancer?
If you find a lump or have other breast changes as a young woman, it is most likely due to another reason and not breast cancer. However, you should always get your symptoms checked. Warning signs of breast cancer include a new lump in the breast; irritation, pain or swelling in the breast; dimpling of breast skin; bloody nipple discharge, red or flaky skin; and changes in the shape or size of the breast.

Contact your doctor if you notice any changes in your breasts or if you have questions about your risk for breast cancer.

* Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Take Head Injuries Seriously

Horrific crashes in extreme sports and professional racing may result in life-threatening traumatic brain injury (TBI). But accidents and falls that cause TBI happen in everyday life, too. TBI affects millions of Americans each year, and about 150 Americans die from TBI-related injuries each day.* Being aware of the risks and taking steps to protect yourself can help prevent serious head injuries.

Q. What Are Head Injuries?
A. Head injuries are the result of trauma to the scalp, skull and/or brain. Traffic accidents, falls, physical assault and accidents at home, work or while playing sports are common causes of head injuries. Head injuries may also be referred to as a brain injury or TBI, depending on the severity of the injury. Your provider may order a computed tomography (CT) scan to check for serious brain injury.

A traumatic brain injury can be life-threatening because the brain swells or has bleeding on its surface. Even though a victim may appear lucid and seem fine right after an accident, a CT scan will show the abnormality. Getting this information early can make a difference between life and death, and prevent nonreversible brain damage.

A concussion is the most common type of mild TBI that happens when the brain is shaken. It may cause a temporary lapse of consciousness, but it is not life-threatening. Concussions are the most common head injury in athletes and children.

Q. What Are the Symptoms of a Traumatic Brain Injury?
A. Someone who suffers a head injury should be monitored closely after an accident because it can take a few hours or even days for symptoms of brain trauma to appear. Be aware of these symptoms and call 911 or bring the victim into the ER if any occur:
• Loss of consciousness for more than a few seconds, confusion or unusual behavior.
• Severe headache.
• Convulsions or seizures.
• More than two episodes of vomiting.
• Inability to wake up or profound drowsiness.
• Unequal size of pupils.
• Fluid draining from the nose, mouth or ears.
• Inability to move one or more limbs, or weakness on one side of the body.

The sooner someone with brain trauma gets medical help, the better chances they have for recovery. People with TBI may need surgery and rehabilitation.

With younger patients that treatment is often different. Children or teenagers that experience head injuries in sports or play often do not need CT scans unless they have certain risk factors or the symptoms listed above, and there is often no specific treatment. In the modern era of concussion treatment, patients no longer need to stay in dark rooms, or stay awake all night. It’s more about treating the headaches with acetaminophen and ibuprofen and focuses on trigger avoidance. If a particular activity triggers headaches, avoid that activity for several days.

Q. How Can Head Injuries Be Prevented?
A. Keep your head protected whenever participating in activities with head injury potential. Safety equipment includes hard hats around heavy machinery or falling objects, seat belts in motor vehicles and helmets when riding a motorcycle or bicycling, skateboarding, skating, skiing or snowboarding. When driving, make sure children are in age-appropriate car seats or booster seats that are installed properly.

For older people, falls are the leading cause of TBI-related death. If you are age 65 or older, you can ask your health care provider to assess your fall risk and provide information on evidence-based fall prevention programs.

“Head injuries as we get older can be very serious, especially if the patient is over the age of 65 or on blood thinning medication. It is very important for these patients to get evaluated in the Emergency Room,” states Dr. Garrett Feddersen, BVRMC Emergency Medical Director.

Use Your Head
If you or a loved one suffers a head injury, don’t be afraid to seek medical care right away. BVRMC’s Emergency Services is here when you need us.

* Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

With concussions, the most important aspect of treatment is to prevent a second concussion, or ‘Second Hit Syndrome.’ This occurs when a patient gets a second head injury soon after the original injury. This can cause brain damage or even death. That is why the return-to-play rules are so important for athletes and need to be followed closely by players, parents and coaches every time.” — Garrett Feddersen, MD, BVRMC Emergency Medical Director
Managing Anxiety in a Post-Pandemic World

The pandemic altered so many aspects of our lives — from work and school to recreation and social gatherings. Pandemic stress has taken a toll as we endured months of quarantines and social isolation. Many people suffered emotional traumas that need time to heal:

- Grieving the loss of family and friends due to COVID-19.
- Experiencing the trauma of illness or hospitalization for yourself or a loved one.
- Working as a health care worker, first responder or front-line essential worker under constant threat of exposure to COVID-19.
- Dealing with job loss and financial strain.
- Navigating school changes and managing the stress of parenting during the pandemic.
- Cancelling or changing plans for milestone events (weddings, family reunions, funerals, etc.).
- Coping with fear and stress related to scheduling vaccine appointments and the safety of vaccines.

Now as we turn the corner with vaccines available to protect against COVID-19, businesses are opening up and people are making plans to return to public life. After months of hunkering down, wearing masks and avoiding hugs, we’re making up for lost time by traveling and visiting friends and family.

Returning to a New Normal

If you’re feeling some anxiety about what happens next, you’re not alone. It’s normal to have some hesitation about diving back into social settings. Here are some tips to help calm your nerves as you venture out.

- **Follow guidelines.** Check with the CDC and your local or state department of health for the latest safety guidelines related to COVID-19.
- **Go forward gradually.** You probably formed some new habits during the pandemic, from mask-wearing and frequent handwashing to elbow bumps and air hugs. It’s OK to hold onto the habits that work well for you. If you feel comfortable, you can gradually make changes to the way you interact with others.
- **Allow time to adjust.** Whether your kids are starting a new school routine or you’re heading back to the office for work, change can be overwhelming. Allow some time to prepare for the changes happening in your life and work out the logistical details.
- **Set expectations with loved ones.** Perhaps you’re looking forward to dining out with a group of friends, but not yet ready to attend a 200-guest wedding or embark on a cruise vacation. Talk to your friends and family about your comfort level so they know where you stand now and how this may evolve over time.
- **Let yourself recharge.** You may feel energized by adding more social events to your calendar, but you may also need some downtime to recharge. Recognize what you need to achieve a healthy balance.

When to Seek Help

Are you feeling overwhelmed by fears or having a hard time leaving the house? If you’re struggling to cope in everyday life, contact your doctor. They can help you understand what’s going on and connect you with help for anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder.

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6 Tips for Coping with Stress

1. **Take care of your body.** Keep your health in balance by eating healthy meals, exercising regularly, getting plenty of sleep and avoiding excessive alcohol, tobacco and substance use.
2. **Try relaxation techniques.** These include meditation, deep breathing, biofeedback, massage, tai chi or yoga.
3. **Make time for yourself.** Allow yourself time to unwind every day and prioritize doing activities you enjoy.
4. **Connect with family, friends, community and religious groups.** Keep in touch with those who can provide emotional and other types of support.
5. **Monitor your stress level.** Be aware of your body’s reactions to stress, such as problems sleeping, feelings of sadness or increasing the use of alcohol or other substances.
6. **Talk to your doctor.** If you’re feeling overwhelmed, make an appointment with your doctor to discuss your feelings and get stress under control.
Have a Healthy Pregnancy
Learn the Benefits of Being Active

You’ve taken all the steps to prepare for pregnancy. Now that you’re positive about your test results, keep the momentum going! Take care of your health and the health of your baby by getting prenatal care during your pregnancy. Scheduling regular checkups with your health care provider is an important first step. Here are other steps you can take:

• Eat healthy foods, including lots of fresh veggies and fruit, and low-fat dairy products.
• Take a prenatal vitamin with folic acid.
• Avoid smoking and drinking alcohol.
• Keep physically fit.

“Having a healthy diet and exercise routine during pregnancy is an investment in your future and can make pregnancy more enjoyable. We look forward to helping you have a safe and fun transition to parenthood!”

— Elizabeth Dupic, MD, UnityPoint Family Medicine Buena Vista

Benefits of Physical Activity During Pregnancy
Being physically active is safe for both you and baby. And it offers several potential benefits for healthy moms-to-be, such as:

• Boosting your energy and your mood.
• Helping you get a better night’s sleep.
• Preventing or easing backaches, constipation and varicose veins.
• Making your labor shorter and recovery after childbirth easier.

How Much Activity Do You Need?
Healthy pregnant women should aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week. This means you should be able to have a conversation while you’re exercising.

Choose low-impact activities you might enjoy, like aerobics, cycling, dancing, swimming or walking. Include strengthening exercises at least two days a week. Try using resistance bands or hand weights.

It’s important to speak with your doctor before starting any exercise routine. If you exercised regularly before pregnancy, ask your doctor if it’s safe for you to continue your routine or if some changes are needed.

Safe Physical Activity Is Key
Use the following tips to stay safe during exercise:

• If you haven’t been active, start slowly — just five minutes of walking can help.
• Be sure to drink water before, during and after activity.
• Avoid outdoor activities during hot and humid weather.
• Gentle stretching helps you warm up before exercise and cool down when you’re finished.
• Listen to your body and stop when you need to.
• Find ways to adapt your activity to meet your body’s changing shape. As baby grows, your center of gravity changes, which can affect your balance.

At BVRMC, we support the health of moms and babies. Visit bvrmc.org to learn more about our childbirth services.

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

When was your last mammogram?

Schedule your appointment today through your family doctor.

You may qualify for a FREE mammogram. To find out, call 712.213.8691.
Confetti Grain Salad

Chop up your favorite fresh veggies to add color and crunch to this savory salad. Note: This is a vegan recipe.

Servings: 6

Ingredients
1 ½ cups brown rice, uncooked
3 cups water
2 lemons (juiced)
3 green onions (also called scallions)
¼ cup parsley (minced)
½ teaspoon salt
1 dash black pepper (to taste)
¼ cup olive oil (or other vegetable oil)
1 ½ cups vegetables (of your favorite, cut into small pieces)

Directions
1. Wash rice and put into a 2-quart pot with water. Bring to boil, then lower heat to simmer, and cook uncovered until all the water is absorbed (approximately 45 minutes).
2. Pour into medium-sized bowl and allow to cool.
3. Pour lemon juice over rice and stir. When rice is cooled to lukewarm, add vegetables, salt, pepper and oil.
4. Stir and chill at least 1 hour. This dish also can be served warm.

Nutrition information per serving: 288 calories; 11 g total fat; 2 g saturated fat; 0 mg cholesterol; 225 mg sodium; 43 g carbohydrates; 5 g dietary fiber; 3 g total sugars; 0 g added sugars; 23 g protein; 0 mcg vitamin D; 41 mg calcium; 1 mg iron; 1,143 mg potassium.

Recipe courtesy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes

Cranberry Apple Crisp

This whole-grain dessert strikes a perfect balance of sweet and tart.

Bonus: It’s also vegan!

Servings: 8

Ingredients
4 apples (cored and thinly sliced)
1 can cranberry sauce (14 ounce, whole)
2 tablespoons vegetable-based margarine (soft, melted)
1 cup oatmeal (uncooked)
¹/₃ cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon

Directions
1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. Wash apples, remove cores and slice thinly, keeping peel on.
3. In a bowl, combine the whole cranberry sauce and apples. Pour into an 8-by-8-inch pan.
4. Combine melted margarine with oatmeal, brown sugar and cinnamon until well blended. Sprinkle over apple/cranberry mixture.
5. Cover and bake for 15 minutes.
6. Uncover and bake 10 more minutes until the topping is crisp and brown.
7. Serve warm or cold.

Nutrition information per serving: 204 calories; 2 g total fat; 0 g saturated fat; 0 mg cholesterol; 306 mg sodium; 47 g carbohydrates; 3 g dietary fiber; 38 g total sugars; 27 g added sugars; 2 g protein; 0 mcg vitamin D; 22 mg calcium; 1 mg iron, 140 mg potassium.

Recipe adapted from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes

Split Pea Soup

Enjoy this hearty vegan soup featuring the flavors of carrots, celery and thyme.

Cook time: 2 hours 30 minutes

Servings: 5

Ingredients
2 teaspoons vegetable oil
1 Spanish onion (peeled and chopped)
3 carrots (scrubbed and chopped)
2 celery stalks (chopped)
1 teaspoon dried thyme
2 ¼ cups split peas (rinsed and picked over)
4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
6 cups water
¹/₈ cup lemon juice

Directions
1. Put soup pot on the stove on medium heat. Add oil when the pot is hot.
2. Add onion, carrots, celery and thyme and cook 10-15 minutes, until tender.
3. Add split peas, stock and 4 cups water. Raise the heat to high and bring to a boil.
4. Lower the heat to low and cook about 2 hours, partially covered, until the peas have fallen apart. Check the soup during cooking. If more water is needed, add up to 2 cups. Skim off any foam that forms.
5. Serve right away or cover and refrigerate up to three days. Stir in the lemon juice just before serving.

Nutrition information per serving: 329 calories; 4 g total fat; 1 g saturated fat; 0 mg cholesterol; 124 mg sodium; 54 g total carbohydrate; 20 g dietary fiber; 10 g total sugars; 0 g added sugars; 23 g protein; 0 mcg vitamin D; 82 mg calcium; 4 mg iron, 1,143 mg potassium.

Recipe adapted from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes
Cold, Flu, Seasonal Allergies or COVID?
Compare the Symptoms

Your throat feels scratchy. You’re so tired, it’s difficult to even leave your bed. It’s official, you’re sick. What now? A cold, flu, seasonal allergies and COVID-19 share many similar symptoms. See some of the similarities and differences between these illnesses so you can find the right relief.

## Cold vs. Flu vs. Allergies vs. COVID-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMPTOMS</th>
<th>COLD</th>
<th>FLU</th>
<th>ALLERGIES</th>
<th>COVID-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fever</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common (100–102°F. Can last 3–4 days)</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Common (can range from mild to severe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Headache</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Muscle and body aches</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes (Mild)</td>
<td>Common (Severe)</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fatigue</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes (Mild)</td>
<td>Common (Intense, can last up to 2–3 weeks)</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loss of taste/smell</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes (Especially with a stuffy nose)</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Runny/stuffy nose</strong></td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sneezing</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common (Has been reported)</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sore throat</strong></td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cough</strong></td>
<td>Common (Mild to moderate)</td>
<td>Common (Can become severe)</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common (Dry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shortness of breath</strong></td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rare, except for those with allergic asthma</td>
<td>Sometimes (In more serious infections)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Know the Signs

### Is It Allergies?
Allergy symptoms usually appear suddenly and may last for several weeks or longer. Seasonal allergies may flare up in the spring and fall, depending on where you live and what you are most sensitive to. Good to know: Allergies do not cause a fever.

### Is It a Cold?
Common cold symptoms appear gradually and usually last a week to 10 days. Good to know: Sneezing and stuffy nose are often telltale signs of a cold.

### Is It the Flu?
The symptoms of flu can last 7–14 days. Good to know: Flu may be characterized by a sudden onset of symptoms.

### Is It COVID-19?
COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild to severe. Most people feel better within two to three weeks, but it may take six weeks or longer to recover from a severe COVID-19 infection. Good to know: Loss of taste or smell is common with COVID-19.
Clearing Up Confusion About Vaccine Safety

Misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines created confusion and hesitancy about getting vaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccine rollout in the U.S. sparked debates about vaccine safety and challenged our knowledge about vaccines in general. As we move into fall, it’s important to remain vigilant about getting the flu shot and other recommended vaccines for children and adults.

The decision to get vaccines is up to you, and it’s important to get the facts first. Here are some frequently asked questions about vaccine safety:

**Do vaccines make you sick?** You may experience side effects from vaccines, such as soreness in your arm, a low-grade fever or fatigue. However, you won’t get infected with COVID-19 or other diseases from vaccines.

**Do vaccines have toxic and harmful ingredients?** Some vaccines contain ingredients like formaldehyde and aluminum, but these ingredients aren’t harmful in trace amounts used in vaccines. Some people are allergic to the gelatin and egg proteins used in certain vaccines, which can cause severe allergic reactions in rare cases. If you have a history of allergic reactions, talk to your doctor before getting vaccinated.

**Do vaccines overload the immune system in children?** Babies and young children need numerous vaccines to keep them safe and healthy. There’s no reason to worry that giving multiple vaccines at one time can be harmful to children. Waiting to vaccinate can put children at risk and lead to outbreaks of diseases like measles and chickenpox.

**Is natural immunity better than a vaccine?** Vaccines are designed to provide the immunity you need to protect against disease — without the potentially damaging effects from COVID-19 or other vaccine-preventable diseases. Getting vaccinated is safer than getting sick from the disease, and the effectiveness of vaccines may be even better than natural immunity in some cases.

**Do vaccines cause autism?** Some parents worry that vaccines could cause autism in children, but this is not true. The claim linking the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine to autism has been discredited and retracted after hundreds of studies have shown there is no connection.

**Can vaccines be used to microchip people?** The idea that vaccines could be used to microchip people is completely false. However, this claim circulated on the internet during the pandemic and led to confusion and uncertainty about vaccination.

Talk to your doctor if you have questions about vaccines, especially if you’re pregnant or have a history of allergic reactions to vaccines.

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**COVID-19 Vaccination in Children**

The American Academy of Pediatrics will make COVID-19 vaccine recommendations for children as young as 6 months old when clinical trials are complete. The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is approved for teens ages 16+ and children ages 12 to 15. Moderna’s COVID-19 vaccine is also undergoing clinical trials for children.
Technology Trends for Today’s Tech-Savvy Seniors

2020 showed us all how technology can keep us connected in countless ways. Thanks to technology, we shopped, ordered in, played online board games with friends, visited the doctor and even streamed our fitness classes. People of all ages can benefit from learning new technology — and doing so helps keep us feeling young, even as we age.

Technology is a powerful tool that can improve safety, independence and quality of life for older adults. Here are a few of the technologies already being used. And some, you are sure to see in the near future.

Digital Content for Seniors
Many digital tools are available to keep seniors engaged and entertained. Beyond Netflix are puzzle apps such as Wordbrain and streaming services such as CuriosityStream, which presents award-winning documentary features. Spiro100 is another video streaming service that offers exercise and wellness programs designed to improve quality of life for seniors.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)/Voice Assistants
Voice assistants such as Amazon Echo (aka Alexa) and Google Nest can provide reminders for taking medicine or visiting the doctor. They also allow you to control the lights and adjust the TV.

Music therapy platforms like Muru Music use AI to create personalized playlists. This allows you to program and play the right music at the right time to help stimulate memories and elevate mood.

Virtual Reality (VR)
VR offers an immersive experience for older people. They can reenact their favorite hobbies using VR to create peaceful, calming experiences. Other immersive experiences include travel, music, art, nature and reminiscence therapies (a method that helps those with memory impairments recall past events using the five senses.).

Wearable Technologies
There are a variety of wearable technologies that can track health and offer security. Smartwatches have the capability to notify emergency contacts. Apple Watch even has fall detection and will automatically make a call to your emergency contacts. Smartwatches specifically designed for seniors make it easy to manage health data and share information with caregivers and health care providers.

Medical alert wearables are also available and include activity monitoring and emergency monitoring services.

Robotic Pets
When real pets aren’t an option, robotic pets offer many of the same benefits. They relieve loneliness, reduce anxiety and provide fun engagement for older adults and people with dementia.

Activity Tracking
Motion sensors can monitor physical activity and improve safety. For instance, they can detect falls and alert caregivers to check in.

GPS insoles, developed specifically for seniors with Alzheimer’s and other dementias, are placed inside a shoe insole and send location updates by text and email to caregivers.

Smart Pillboxes
Digital medication dispensers have sensors that release the right dose of medicine at the right time — preventing overdosing or underdosing. They also alert caregivers if a dose is missed.

If you have questions or concerns about health or safety for you or a loved one, talk to your doctor. He or she can guide you in finding the right resources for your situation.