Cancer Prevention and Early Detection Worksheet for Women

While a tremendous amount of progress has been made in cancer research, we still don’t understand exactly what causes most cancers. However, we know of many factors that place us at higher risk for different cancers. Some of these factors are beyond our control, but there are others that we can do something about. And today we have tests that can help us detect some cancers in their earliest stages.

Below you will find helpful information on the most common cancers that can affect you as a woman. A checklist shows what can increase your risk, and a second list shows how you can lower this risk. The early detection column shows ways that you can detect cancer early, when it is most easily treated. The final column on each sheet allows for you to develop your own plan of action to help prevent or detect cancer.

It’s important to know that some factors may place you at higher risk than others, and some actions may lower your risk more than others. Many cancers develop without any known factors present. For a more thorough explanation of cancer risk factors, visit our Cancer Reference Information section at www.cancer.org, or call us any time, day or night, at 1-800-ACS-2345. And if you have any risk factors or haven’t had your early detection tests, please take this worksheet and discuss it with your doctor.

Cancer-Related Checkups

The American Cancer Society recommends that all women get cancer-related checkups as part of general health visits after age 20. This checkup should include health counseling and, depending on your age, might include looking for cancers of the skin, thyroid, mouth, lymph nodes, and ovaries, as well as for some diseases other than cancer.

Special tests for certain cancers are recommended as outlined below.

We’re available to answer your questions about cancer any time, day or night. Call us at 1-800-ACS-2345, or visit us online at www.cancer.org.
### Lung Cancer

#### Risk Factors

- Do you smoke tobacco?
- Have you or do you now work around asbestos?
- Are you or have you been exposed to radon?
- Have you been exposed to uranium, arsenic, or vinyl chloride in your workplace?
- Do you smoke marijuana?
- Are you or have you been regularly exposed to secondhand smoke?

For more information on risk factors, read [What are the Risk Factors for Lung Cancer?](www.cancer.org).

#### Preventive Behaviors

- Quit smoking
- Encourage those you live with or work with to quit
- Avoid areas where people are smoking around you
- Some people choose to contact their state’s radon office or the US Environmental Protection Agency to learn about having their basements checked for radon

For more information on preventive behaviors, read [Can Lung Cancer Be Prevented?](www.cancer.org).

#### Early Detection

No tests have been proven to diagnose lung cancer early enough to make a difference in survival. Lung cancer is usually found on x-ray, and there are often no symptoms.

For more information, read [Can Lung Cancer Be Found Early?](www.cancer.org).

**If you have any of these risk factors:**

- Talk to your doctor about early detection if you have any of the risk factors listed

#### Your Action Plan:

Steps to Lower Your Risk (Prevention):

### Early Detection:

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### Colorectal Cancer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Preventive Behaviors</th>
<th>Early Detection</th>
<th>Your Action Plan:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q Have you ever had colorectal cancer?</td>
<td>q Follow early detection guidelines to find and remove adenomatous polyps before they become cancer</td>
<td><strong>Starting at age 50,</strong> you should follow one of the 6 options below. The tests that are designed to find both early cancer and polyps are preferred if these tests are available to you and you are willing to have one of these more invasive tests. Talk to your doctor about which test is best for you.</td>
<td><strong>Steps to Lower Your Risk (Prevention):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q Have you ever had a type of intestinal polyp called adenomatous polyp?</td>
<td>q Get at least 30-45 minutes of physical activity on at least 5 days per week. For more information on exercise, click here</td>
<td>Tests that can find polyps and cancer:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>q Have you had chronic inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis for several years?</td>
<td>q Achieve and maintain a healthy weight</td>
<td>q Double contrast barium enema every 5 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q Are you over 50 years of age?</td>
<td>q Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods, and limit foods high in saturated fat, like high-fat dairy products, processed meats, and red meats</td>
<td>q Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q Has anyone in your family had colon or rectal cancer?</td>
<td>q Quit smoking</td>
<td>q Colonoscopy every 10 years</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>q Do you have a colorectal cancer syndrome in your family, such as familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or hereditary nonpolyposis colon cancer (HNPPC)?</td>
<td>q Cut back to not more than 1 alcoholic drink per day, if you drink at all</td>
<td>q CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy) every 5 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q Do you eat a lot of red meat or processed meats?</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Early detection:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q Are you physically inactive?</td>
<td>For more information on preventive behaviors, read Can Colorectal Cancer Be Prevented? on <a href="http://www.cancer.org">www.cancer.org</a>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>q Are you overweight?</td>
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<tr>
<td>q Do you use tobacco?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q Do you average more than 1 alcoholic drink per day?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Steps to Lower Your Risk (Prevention):**

For more information on early detection, read Can Colorectal Cancer Be Found Early? on www.cancer.org.
### Risk Factors

- Do you or have you sunbathed?
- Do you use tanning beds or booths?
- Do you have fair skin with blonde or red hair?
- Do you sunburn easily or have many freckles?
- Did you have severe sunburns as a child?
- Do you have many or unusually shaped moles?
- Do you live in a southern climate or at a high altitude?
- Do you spend a lot of time outdoors (for work or recreation)?
- Have you ever received radiation treatment?
- Has anyone in your family had skin cancer?
- Do you have a weakened immune system due to an organ transplant, HIV infection, or another condition?
- Were you born with xeroderma pigmentosum (XP), basal cell nevus syndrome, or dysplastic nevus syndrome?
- Have you been exposed to any of the following chemicals?
  - Arsenic
  - Radium
  - Coal tar
  - Paraffin


### Preventive Behaviors

- Stay out of the sun as much as possible, especially between 10 AM and 4 PM
- Wear a broad-brimmed hat, a shirt, and sunglasses when out in the sun
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, and reapply it often
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses with at least 99% UV absorption, labeled as blocking UVA and UVB light; or "UV absorption to 400 nm," which means UVA and UVB protection
- Do not use tanning beds or sunlamps
- Protect young children from excess sun exposure
- Check your skin often for abnormal or changing areas, especially moles, and have them examined by your doctor

For more information on preventive behaviors, read Can Melanoma Be Prevented? or Can Squamous and Basal Cell Skin Cancer Be Prevented? on www.cancer.org.

### Early Detection

- Become familiar with any moles, freckles, or other spots on your skin. Use mirrors or have a family member or close friend look at areas you can't see (ears, scalp, lower back).
- Check for skin changes once a month. Show any suspicious or changing areas to your doctor

Cancer-Related Checkup (including skin exam) with your doctor is recommended during regular visits for people age 20 and older, especially those with risk factors for skin cancer.

For more information on early detection, read Can Melanoma Be Found Early? or Can Squamous and Basal Cell Skin Cancer Be Found Early? on www.cancer.org.

### Your Action Plan:

Steps to Lower Your Risk (Prevention):

- Stay out of the sun as much as possible, especially between 10 AM and 4 PM
- Wear a broad-brimmed hat, a shirt, and sunglasses when out in the sun
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, and reapply it often
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- Check your skin often for abnormal or changing areas, especially moles, and have them examined by your doctor

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### Early Detection:

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- Check for skin changes once a month. Show any suspicious or changing areas to your doctor

Cancer-Related Checkup (including skin exam) with your doctor is recommended during regular visits for people age 20 and older, especially those with risk factors for skin cancer.

For more information on early detection, read Can Melanoma Be Found Early? or Can Squamous and Basal Cell Skin Cancer Be Found Early? on www.cancer.org.
## Cervical Cancer

### Risk Factors

- Have you ever had sex?
- Have you ever been told that you had human papilloma virus (HPV)?
- Have you ever had genital warts?
- Do you smoke?
- Do you have human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection or AIDS?
- Did your mother take diethylstilbestrol (DES) when she was pregnant with you?


### Preventive Behaviors

- Reduce your risk of getting HPV by:
  - Having sex with only one other person who only has sex with you
  - Practicing safer sex by using condoms each time you have sex
- Quit smoking
- Have regular Pap tests


### Early Detection

- Yearly Pap test to begin about 3 years after you first have sex, or by age 21, whichever is earlier. The newer liquid-based Pap test can be done every 2 years
- After age 30, if you have had 3 normal test results in a row, you may be tested every 2-3 years with Pap or liquid Pap tests, or every 3 years with an HPV DNA test plus a Pap. For more information about HPV, read [What Every Woman Should Know](https://www.cancer.org) on [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).
- If you are 70 years old or older, and have had 3 or more normal Pap tests in a row, you may choose to stop Pap testing
- If you have had a total hysterectomy and you are not at high risk (see below), you may choose to stop Pap testing after 3 or more normal Pap tests in a row, unless the surgery was for cancer

#### Women at high risk:

- Women with poor immune function due to organ transplant, chemotherapy, steroid use, or HIV infection need yearly testing even after age 30
- Women whose mothers took DES during pregnancy need yearly testing even after age 30


### Your Action Plan:

Steps to Lower Your Risk (Prevention):

- Vaccination: The HPV vaccine is given in a 3-dose series to fight HPV infection. HPV vaccine must be given before the woman is infected. The HPV vaccine:
  - is best given between ages 11 and 13
  - may be given between ages 13 and 18 to “catch up”
  - is of uncertain value for women aged 19-26
  - does not replace Pap smears (early detection) because it can’t fight all strains of HPV
  - may require a “booster” shot later. Ask your doctor about this at your regular visits

For more information about the HPV vaccine, read the [American Cancer Society Recommendations for Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine Use](https://www.cancer.org) on [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

Early Detection:

- Yearly Pap test to begin about 3 years after you first have sex, or by age 21, whichever is earlier. The newer liquid-based Pap test can be done every 2 years
- After age 30, if you have had 3 normal test results in a row, you may be tested every 2-3 years with Pap or liquid Pap tests, or every 3 years with an HPV DNA test plus a Pap. For more information about HPV, read [What Every Woman Should Know](https://www.cancer.org) on [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).
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- If you have had a total hysterectomy and you are not at high risk (see below), you may choose to stop Pap testing after 3 or more normal Pap tests in a row, unless the surgery was for cancer

#### Women at high risk:

- Women with poor immune function due to organ transplant, chemotherapy, steroid use, or HIV infection need yearly testing even after age 30
- Women whose mothers took DES during pregnancy need yearly testing even after age 30

## Breast Cancer

### Risk Factors

- Are you over age 40?
- Have you had radiation to the chest as treatment for another cancer?
- Are you or other family members known to have a gene mutation that carries high breast cancer risk, such as BRCA?
- Has anyone in your family had breast cancer (especially mother, sister, or daughter)?
- Have you had breast cancer?
- Did you have your first child after age 30 (or have no children)?
- Did you begin menstruating before age 12, or go through menopause after age 50?
- Have you been on hormone replacement therapy for more than 5 years?
- Do you average more than 1 alcoholic drink per day?
- Are you physically inactive?
- If you are past menopause, have you gained weight, especially around your waist?


### Preventive Behaviors

- Talk with your doctor about the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy for your specific situation
- Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity on 5 or more days a week. For more information on exercise, read At a Glance—Nutrition and Physical Activities on www.cancer.org.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- Decrease your alcohol intake to no more than 1 drink per day

**If you think you may be at high risk for breast cancer:**

- Talk with your doctor about taking tamoxifen or ask about enrolling in a chemoprevention study. For more information, read Medicines to Reduce Breast Cancer Risk on www.cancer.org.


### Early Detection

**Age 20 – 39:**

- Clinical breast examination (CBE) by health care professional every three years
- Be aware of what your breasts normally look and feel like, and promptly report any changes or new breast symptoms to your doctor. Breast self exam is an option

**Age 40 and over:**

- Yearly mammogram
- Yearly clinical breast examination by a health care professional, near the time of the mammogram
- Promptly report any breast changes, including changes in how the skin looks, to your doctor or nurse. Breast self exam is an option

**Women at high risk:**

- Talk with your doctor about starting earlier, and using breast MRI to screen for breast cancer in addition to mammograms and CBE


### Your Action Plan:

Steps to Lower Your Risk (Prevention):

Early Detection:
## Endometrial Cancer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Preventive Behaviors</th>
<th>Early Detection</th>
<th>Your Action Plan:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Does anyone in your family have hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer (HNPCC), or are you at risk for this cancer?</td>
<td>□ Talk with your doctor about the risks and benefits of hormone therapy for your specific situation</td>
<td>□ Talk with your doctor, especially at the time of menopause, about the risks and symptoms of endometrial cancer</td>
<td>Steps to Lower Your Risk: (Prevention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Are you over age 40?</td>
<td>□ If you are taking hormone therapy and you still have your uterus, talk with your doctor about using estrogen with progestin rather than estrogen alone</td>
<td>□ Watch for and report any abnormal spotting or bleeding, or any bleeding after menopause, and report it to your doctor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Did you begin menstruating before age 12, or go through menopause after age 50?</td>
<td>□ If you think you may be at higher risk, talk with your doctor about other preventive measures</td>
<td>□ If you have or are at risk for HNPCC, consider yearly testing with endometrial biopsy beginning at age 35</td>
<td>Early Detection:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Do you have a history of infertility or never giving birth?</td>
<td></td>
<td>For more information on early detection, Can Endometrial Cancer Be Found Early? on <a href="http://www.cancer.org">www.cancer.org</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Are you obese (very overweight)?</td>
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<td>□ Do you eat a lot of animal fat?</td>
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<td>□ Do you have diabetes?</td>
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<td>□ Have you taken tamoxifen or long-term estrogen replacement therapy without progesterone (if you still have your uterus)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Have you had breast or ovarian cancer?</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Have you had radiation therapy to your pelvis?</td>
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## Ovarian Cancer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Your Action Plan:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Have you already gone through menopause?  
- Did you begin menstruating before age 12, or go through menopause after age 50?  
- Did you have your first child after age 30 (or have no children)?  
- Has your mother, sister, or daughter had ovarian or breast cancer?  
- Has one of your parents, siblings, or children had colorectal cancer?  
- Does anyone in your family have hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer (HNPCC), or are you at risk for this cancer?  
- Have you had breast cancer?  
- Have you been on estrogen replacement therapy for more than 10 years? | - Use oral contraceptives for several years  
- Talk with your doctor about the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy for your specific situation  
- Talk with your doctor about having your ovaries removed, if you are at high risk. (This surgery causes sudden menopause) | - There are no effective and proven screening tests for early detection of ovarian cancer. For more information, read Can Ovarian Cancer Be Detected Early? on www.cancer.org.  
- Watching for and reporting signs and symptoms may allow earlier detection. Although all these symptoms can have other causes, see your doctor if you have these almost daily for more than a few weeks:  
  - Bloating  
  - Pain in the pelvis or abdomen  
  - Trouble eating or feeling full quickly  
  - Urinary urgency or frequency | Steps to Lower Your Risk:  
- Early Detection:  
- If your mother, sister, or daughter has had ovarian cancer or breast cancer, or if your parent, sibling, or child has had colorectal cancer, you are at high risk of ovarian cancer. If you have had breast cancer, you are also at high risk. You may want to talk to your doctor about:  
  - Pelvic exam  
  - Pelvic ultrasound  
  - CA-125 blood test |


For more information on preventive behaviors, read Can Ovarian Cancer Be Prevented? on www.cancer.org.