

Why are there racial and ethnic differences in rates of breast cancer?

Some populations have different risk factors which may explain some of the reasons why breast cancer incidence varies among racial and ethnic groups. Some factors include:

- Reproductive factors
- Not breastfeeding
- Taking oral contraceptives
- Using menopausal hormone therapy (postmenopausal hormone use) containing estrogen plus progestin (current or recent use for more than five years)
- Being overweight or obese after menopause
- Drinking alcohol

There are other factors that may play a role including:

- The biology of some breast cancers. For example, African American and Hispanic women are more likely to develop triple negative breast cancer — an aggressive subtype of breast cancer.
- Access to health care. Women from some races/ethnicities are more likely than others to have low income, delay in diagnosis, delay in treatment and lack of follow-up.

Studies are looking at other reasons for these differences. These include possible genetic links to decreased survival.

Resources

Susan G. Komen®
1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)
www.komen.org

American Cancer Society
1-800-ACS-2345
www.cancer.org

Intercultural Cancer Council
www.iccnetwork.org

National Cancer Institute
1-800-4-CANCER
www.cancer.gov

Related fact sheets in this series:

- Breast Cancer Risk Factors
- Breast Cancer Detection
- Breast Cancer Resources

The above list of resources is only a suggested resource and is not a complete listing of breast cancer materials or information. The information contained herein is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional. Komen does not endorse, recommend or make any warranties or representations regarding the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, quality or non-infringement of any of the materials, products or information provided by the organizations referenced herein.

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FACTS FOR LIFE

Racial & Ethnic Differences



For more information, visit www.komen.org or call Susan G. Komen's breast care helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 10 PM ET.

Breast cancer differences

Aside from skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the U.S. It is the most common cancer found among every racial and ethnic group.

Race is not a risk factor for breast cancer. But, the rates of getting and dying from breast cancer differ among ethnic groups.

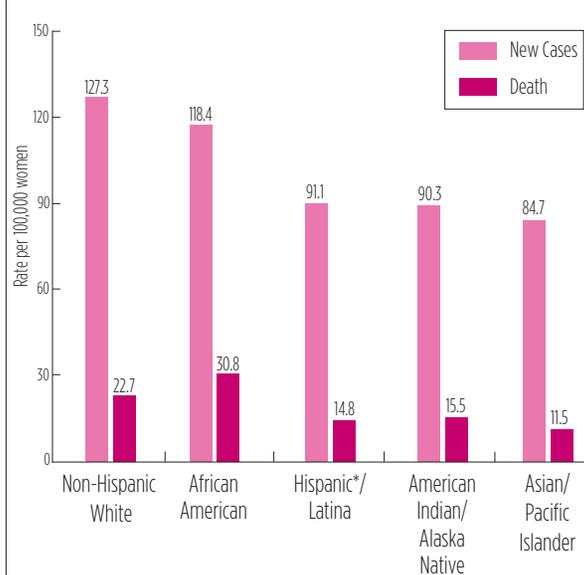


Screening may save lives

Getting regular screening tests (along with treatment if diagnosed) lowers the risk of dying from breast cancer. Screening tests can find breast cancer early, when the chances of survival are highest.

- Have a mammogram every year starting at age 40 if you are at average risk.
- Have a clinical breast exam at least every 3 years starting at age 20, and every year starting at age 40.

Rates of new cases (incidence) and death (mortality) from invasive breast cancer by race and ethnicity, United States (2006-2010)



*Women of Hispanic origin may be any race.

American Cancer Society, Surveillance and Health Services Research, 2013

Incidence (new cases) rates

White women have the highest breast cancer incidence rate of any racial or ethnic group. Under age 45, African American women have a higher incidence of breast cancer than white women.

African American and Hispanic/Latina women are more likely than white women to be diagnosed with later stage breast cancers. They also tend to have larger tumors than white women.

Breast cancer incidence is lower among Asian American and Pacific Islander women than for



white and African American women. Asian American women who are new immigrants have lower rates of breast cancer than those who have lived in the U.S. for many years. For those born in the U.S., the risk is similar to that of white women.

Survival rates

African American women tend to have poorer survival rates than women from other racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. Studies have found that they often have aggressive tumors with a poorer prognosis (chance for recovery).

Hispanic/Latina women are also more likely to die from breast cancer than white women diagnosed at a similar age and stage. Their breast cancers are often found at a later stage. The chance of dying from breast cancer is higher if a tumor is found at a late stage.