

Large print version



Margaret Underwood,
cancer survivor



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NHS Be Clear on Cancer

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Let's be clear about breast cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in England with around 41,200 women diagnosed each year. The older you are, the more likely you are to get it – one in three women who get breast cancer are aged 70 and over.

If breast cancer is detected early, it is more treatable. Finding it early could save your life.

Let's be clear about how to spot it

Women are encouraged to be breast aware. It is important to get to know how your breasts look and feel normally, so that you'll find it easier to spot something unusual. Feel the whole of your breasts and your armpits. Does anything seem different? If you are able to look at your breasts in the mirror, do they appear to have changed at all? If you notice an unusual change, go and see your doctor.

Possible signs of breast cancer include:

- A lump or thickening in your breast or armpit
- Changes to the skin of your breast
- Changes in the shape or size of your breast
- Nipple changes
- Nipple discharge

- Pain in your breast
- Any other unusual or persistent changes to your breasts

If you have any of these symptoms, your doctor will want to see you.

Let's be clear about how important it is to see your doctor

If you notice any changes in your breasts, it is important that you contact your doctor straight away. You're not wasting anyone's time and it's much better to be sure, if only to put your mind at rest.

Finding breast cancer early makes it more treatable. A trip to your doctor's surgery could save your life. And if a friend or relative says they have any of these symptoms, insist they see their doctor.

Let's be clear about breast cancer screening

Breast screening uses x-rays to look at the breasts (mammography). Women between the ages of 50 and 70 are currently invited for screening every three years. Screening can detect breast cancer at an earlier stage. In some parts of England, some women aged 47 – 49 and 71 – 73 are being invited for screening as part of a major research trial.

If you're over 70, you can ask for a free screening every three years. Just get in touch with your local breast screening unit to make an appointment (find your local unit on NHS Choices at [nhs.uk/breastscreening](https://www.nhs.uk/breastscreening)).

To help you decide whether or not you want to have breast screening, you can read about the process and its benefits and risks at [nhs.uk/breast-screening-programme](https://www.nhs.uk/breast-screening-programme)

Whatever your age, and even if you attend screening, it's important to remain breast aware. If you find anything unusual or notice a possible symptom, don't wait for your screening appointment – see your doctor right away to be on the safe side.

You can find your doctor's contact details online at [nhs.uk/findgp](https://www.nhs.uk/findgp)

Let's be clear about how seeing your doctor early could save your life

Margaret Underwood, aged 76, Supporter of Breast Cancer Care says:

Like many women over 70, I don't tend to look at my breasts very often. But when I spotted some changes to my breast in April 2012, I knew I needed to act quickly. One of my nipples and the skin underneath had changed, so I made an appointment to see my doctor straight away. I was sent for tests and diagnosed with breast cancer. Although I suspected cancer, it was still a shock to hear – I didn't realise that the older you are, the more likely you are to get it. Thanks to treatment, my tumour was successfully removed. My family and the doctors were so supportive and I now work closely with local support groups helping others with breast cancer. I'm so glad I acted quickly. I would urge other women to be aware of changes to their breasts. If you notice something out of the ordinary, visit your doctor straight away.

Let's be clear about how to reduce your chances of getting breast cancer

Maintain a healthy weight

Keeping a healthy body weight is a great way to help reduce your risk of cancer.

Cut down on alcohol

Drinking too much alcohol can lead to a number of health problems and is linked with breast cancer. By drinking less, you'll reduce your health risks.

Look after yourself

Keep fit and stay active. Swimming, exercise classes, dancing or yoga – no matter what type of exercise, the more you can do, the better.

Unclear on anything?

Then visit [nhs.uk/breastcancer70](https://www.nhs.uk/breastcancer70)

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call Cancer Research UK's information nurses on freephone:
0808 800 4040

This leaflet is also available in alternative formats from the website above or from Public Health England - please email enquiries@phe.gov.uk

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