

Risk Factors

Aside from being female, the strongest risk factor for developing breast cancer is age. Other risk factors include: a personal or family history of breast cancer, an inherited gene mutation (e.g., BRCA1), dense breasts, high-dose radiation to the chest, early menstruation and/or late menopause, never being pregnant or first pregnancy after age 30, use of oral contraceptives, and hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Being obese, physically inactive, and having one or more alcoholic drinks daily may increase your risk of getting breast cancer. Breastfeeding, being physically active, and maintaining a healthy weight may lower your risk.¹



Warning Signs and Symptoms

The earliest sign is an abnormality detected on a mammogram before it can be felt by the woman or her doctor. As the tumor gets larger, it can be felt as a breast lump, thickening, swelling, or tenderness. Other signs include skin irritation, dimpling, nipple pain, discharge, scaliness, or retraction. Breast pain may result from other benign (harmless) health conditions. Check with a doctor or other health professional if you experience any of these symptoms.¹

Early Detection

Having a mammogram--an x-ray of the breast—or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) are the best forms of screening and early detection for breast cancer. The American Cancer Society recommends that women who are at average risk (no family or genetic history) should start having yearly mammograms at age 40 (earlier if you are at higher risk) in addition to yearly clinical breast exams.¹

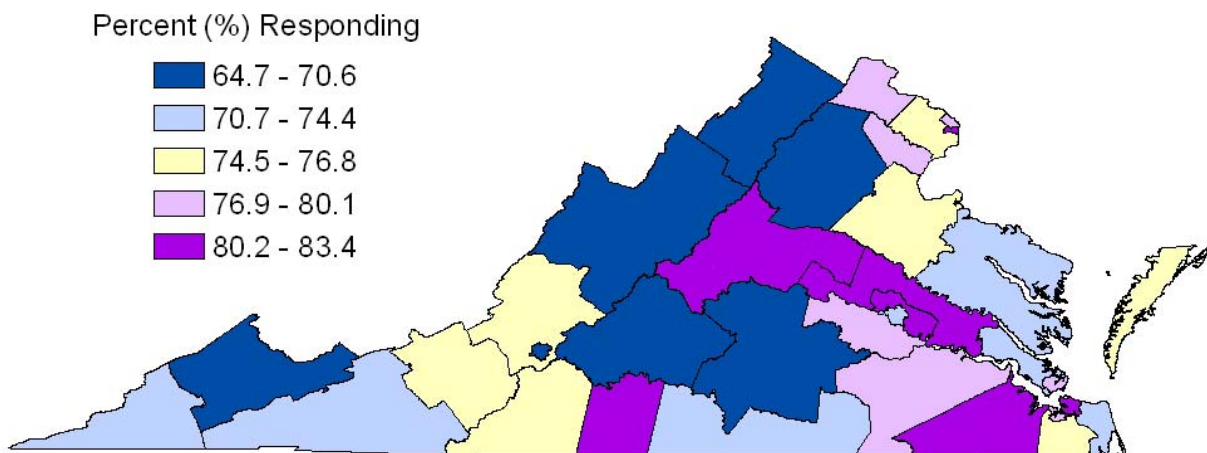
Breast Cancer in Virginia

- Breast cancer was the leading cancer diagnosed among women in the U.S. and in Virginia.^{2,3} According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated 182,460 women in the U.S., *including 4,680 women in Virginia*, will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008.¹
- Breast cancer was the **second** leading cause of death due to cancer among women.^{2,4} An estimated **40,480 women** will die from breast cancer nationwide, *including 1,140 women in Virginia*, in 2008. Breast cancer will account for 26% of all new cancer cases and 16% of all cancer deaths in the U.S.¹
- Between 2001 and 2005, Virginia women were diagnosed with breast cancer at a rate of **120.1 cases** per 100,000,³ and died at a rate of **26.4 deaths** per 100,000.⁴ The U.S. incidence rate was 126.1 cases and the mortality rate was 25 deaths per 100,000. Virginia had the **ninth (9th)** highest breast cancer mortality rate among all states.²
- Three out of four (76.6%) cases of breast cancer occurred among women ages 50 and older.³ **One-in-eight women** will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime.¹
- White and black women in Virginia were diagnosed with breast cancer at similar rates; however, black women had a mortality rate 42% higher than that of white women.^{3,4}

National data indicates that Asian, Hispanic and American Indian women had lower breast cancer incidence and mortality rates.²

- From 1995 to 2005, the breast cancer incidence rate in Virginia climbed steadily and peaked in 2000, after which it declined. The mortality rate declined by about 17% during the same time period.^{3,4}
- The five-year relative survival rate for breast cancer is **98%** if diagnosed early.¹ Breast cancer is treatable when detected early. In Virginia, 60% of women were diagnosed with breast cancer in its earliest (local) stage when it's most curable. White women (62%) were diagnosed early more often than black women (52%).³
- According to a 2006 state health behavior survey, **76.5%** of women 40 years and older had a mammogram within the past two years—same as the national rate. Mammography rates were lowest among women who were younger (less than age 50), less educated, lower income, uninsured, and living with a disability.⁵ Figure 1 shows that Cumberland Plateau (64.7%), Lord Fairfax (65.1%), and Roanoke City (68.5%) had the lowest mammography screening rates among the 35 health districts.

Figure 1 -- Mammogram in Past Two Years by Health District, Women 40 and Older, Virginia, 2004-2006



Source: Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Percentages are weighted.

- In Virginia, there were 1,588 inpatient hospitalizations for female breast cancer that occurred in 2006, at a total charge (cost) of \$33 million. The average length of stay was 2.6 days, and the average charge per stay was \$20,870.⁶

¹ American Cancer Society *Cancer Facts & Figures 2008* (<http://www.cancer.org>).

² Ries LAG, Melbert D, Krapcho M, Stinchcomb DG, et al. (eds.), *SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2005*, National Cancer Institute. Bethesda, MD: 2008 (http://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975_2005/).

³ Virginia Cancer Registry. Based on combined data from 2001-2005. Rates are age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population.

⁴ VDH Division of Health Statistics. Based on combined data from 2001-2005. Rates are age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population.

⁵ Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Rates are population-weighted.

⁶ Virginia Health Information Hospital Discharge Patient-Level Dataset.