



# Breast Cancer and the Workplace

## Understand the main risk factors for developing breast cancer.

The most common risks for developing breast cancer are found outside the workplace.

Risk factors include:



Genetics



Dense  
breast tissue



Younger age at first  
menstruation



Obesity



Alcohol use

## Know the most common work-related risk factors.

Things that you work with or ways that you work may also raise your risk of breast cancer.

These include:



### Cleaning chemicals

**A risk for:**

Janitorial/cleaning staff, laundry and dry cleaning staff, anyone with regular and unprotected contact with chemicals.

**What's the risk?**

Cleaners, waxes/polishes, degreasers, paint thinners and solvents can contribute to cancer risks.



### Night shift work

**A possible risk for:**

People who routinely work night shifts, or who switch between working days and nights often.

**What's the risk?**

Melatonin disruption can interfere with hormone function and increases breast tissue production. This can raise the chance of cancer development.



### Sedentary work

**A risk for:**

Anyone who spends most or all of their workday seated, and especially post-menopausal women.

**What's the risk?**

It's unknown which aspects of sedentary work contribute most to cancer growth. Inactivity may simply elevate the other risk factors.

## Did you know?



**Regular screening mammograms are the best way to spot breast cancer early. It is easiest to treat breast cancer before it can grow larger or spread.**



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## Protect yourself from increased cancer risks at work.

With a few simple steps, you may be able to reduce your risk of developing breast cancer.



### Chemicals

#### To protect yourself:

Build and use good ventilation systems. Open windows whenever possible.

Read and follow product label instructions and Safety Data Sheet information.

Wear a mask and gloves when dealing with harmful chemicals.

Wash your hands after handling chemicals and before eating and drinking.

Use “green” cleaning products when possible.

Use the [list of safer cleansers from EPA](#) to select cleaning products.



### Night shift work

#### To protect yourself:

Mention your regular overnight shift work as a possible risk factor to your health care provider.

If possible, you may want to consider reducing the number of night shifts you work.



### Sedentary work

#### To protect yourself:

Incorporate movement into your workday whenever possible. If you have a job where you sit all day, try to take short, frequent movement breaks or stand while working.

Try to prioritize movement outside of the workday, especially if you have any other risk factors and/or are post-menopausal.

Not sure if a chemical is dangerous?

Look up if the chemical is dangerous using the [DHS website](#).



## About the Wisconsin Well Woman Program

The Wisconsin Well Woman Program helps women who have little or no health insurance get screening for breast and cervical cancers. If you have little or no health insurance and would like to be screened, reach out to the Wisconsin Well Woman Program Coordinator in your county for more information:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wwwp/counties.htm>



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