

Inflammatory Breast Cancer

Inflammatory breast cancer (IBC) is an uncommon, highly aggressive form of breast cancer in which cancerous cells obstruct the lymph vessels in the breast. The disease is named because of its primary symptoms of redness and swelling. IBC spreads throughout the breast, but it is not commonly detected by mammograms because the disease often does not produce a well-defined lump or mass.

Among breast cancer patients in the United States, IBC comprises approximately 1% to 5% of those cases. Early detection and efficient treatment are important as IBC can spread rapidly to other locations in the body, often within a matter of weeks or months.

Symptoms

The following may be symptoms of IBC but could be linked to other health conditions. If these symptoms are present, patients are encouraged to consult their physician for proper testing:

- Sudden increase in the size of one breast
- Feeling of heaviness or tenderness in the breast
- Breast becomes swollen or warm to the touch
- Recurring itching, burning, or other pain in the breast
- Dimpled skin, like an orange peel
- Change in texture or color of the skin on the breast, including ridges, pitted appearance, puckering, and roughness
- Nipple discharge or inversion
- Swelling of lymph nodes on the underarm or collar bone
- A persistent bruise; redness, pink, or reddish-purple coloration
- Lump or thickening of the breast tissue

Risk Factors

- IBC tends to have a higher incidence in women under 40 years old
- African American women have a higher risk of the disease and are diagnosed at a younger age
- IBC tends to have a higher incidence among overweight and obese women
- Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding may be diagnosed with IBC
- Men can be diagnosed with IBC, typically at an older age than women

Treatment Options

IBC patients should consult with a medical oncologist to determine their specific treatment needs. A common treatment regimen usually begins with chemotherapy, taken by mouth as pills or administered into a vein through a needle. Using more than one type of treatment, including chemotherapy, surgery, radiation therapy, targeted therapy, hormone therapy, immunotherapy, and palliative medicine has been shown to have better outcomes.

Because IBC can grow and spread rapidly and is more likely to recur after treatment than other types of breast cancer, it is classified as an aggressive cancer. Though the long-term survival rate for IBC is lower than that of other breast cancer types, new research developments are continuing to find innovative cancer treatments that may improve the survival outlook for IBC patients. Since IBC symptoms may be mistaken for other non-cancerous conditions, such as a breast infection, patients with concerns about their diagnosis and treatment should request a biopsy to detect cancer cells.

About Texas Oncology

With more than 530 physicians and 280 locations, Texas Oncology is an independent private practice, a member of The US Oncology Network, that sees more than 71,000 new cancer patients each year. Founded in 1986, Texas Oncology provides comprehensive, multidisciplinary care, and includes Texas Center for Proton Therapy, Texas Breast Specialists, Texas Colon & Rectal Specialists, Texas Oncology Surgical Specialists, Texas Urology Specialists and Texas Infusion and Imaging Center. Texas Oncology's robust community-based clinical trials and research program has contributed to the development of more than 100 FDA-approved cancer therapies. Learn more at [TexasOncology.com](https://www.texasoncology.com).

Sources: American Cancer Society and The National Cancer Institute



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Updated: 9/23/2024

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