What are risk factors for Breast Cancer?

- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Family history of breast cancer
- Genetic changes
- Early menstrual period (before the age of 12)
- Older age at birth of first child or never having a full-term pregnancy
- Dense breast tissue
- Starting menopause after the age of 55
- Previous radiation therapy treatment for Hodgkin’s disease

What are risk factors we can control?

- Using hormone therapy to replace estrogen or progesterone in menopause
- Not being physically active
- Being overweight
- Alcohol consumption
- Smoking
- Stress and anxiety

To learn more about the Breast Health Center, call 516.663.3887
What is a Breast Cancer screening?
A breast cancer screening is an examination performed to find breast cancer before symptoms begin. A screening may include a clinical breast exam, screening mammogram, breast ultrasound and/or breast MRI.

A woman with no signs or symptoms of breast cancer should have a clinical breast exam by a doctor or healthcare professional annually and a yearly mammogram starting at 40 years old. Speak with your physician to determine if a mammogram is needed sooner. Research has shown that an annual mammogram can lead to early detection of breast cancer when it is most curable.

What are the screening recommendations?
The American College of Radiology recommends a screening mammogram every year starting at age 40. Mammography remains the gold standard for screening most women.

5 to 10% of breast cancers are thought to be hereditary. The National Cancer Institute recommends that women at an increased risk due to family history should begin screening before the age of 40. Women who are at high risk may also need additional screening.

If you have had breast cancer, you’re 3 to 4 times more likely to develop a new cancer in the other breast or in a different part of the same breast. If you have had radiation to the chest to treat another cancer like Hodgkin’s disease, you have a higher than average risk of breast cancer. Therefore, follow-up screenings are strongly recommended.

Breast Density
Dense breast tissue is common and is not abnormal. However, it makes it more difficult to interpret your mammogram and may be associated with an increased risk of developing breast cancer. It is important to understand breast density and what to do if you have dense breasts.

What is breast density?
Breasts are made up of fibrous, glandular and fatty tissue. If you have a lot of fibrous or glandular tissue and not a lot of fat, you have dense breasts.

Density is measured by the amount of fatty tissue in the breasts; the more fatty tissue, the less dense the breast. An estimated 40-50% of women aged 40-74 have dense breasts. Density can decrease with age but not always. It is also not clear why some women have a lot of dense breast tissue and others do not.

How do you know if you have dense breasts?
Density is determined by the radiologist who reads your mammogram. In New York, there is a law that says a doctor or facility that provides mammograms must notify women if they are found to have dense breasts.

What do I do if I am told that I have dense breasts?
You should talk to your doctor about your mammogram and have a yearly mammogram screening. There is some evidence that additional tests may make it more likely that breast cancer is detected in dense breast tissue. You and your doctor may consider additional testing based on your risk factors. Additional testing may include:

3D mammography – Tomosynthesis
This is an advanced form of mammography that takes multiple images of the entire breast. The benefits can include earlier detection of small breast cancers and clearer images of dense breast tissue. At NYU Winthrop Hospital we offer 3D mammography to all of our patients.

Breast Ultrasound
This is an imaging of the breast using sound waves to produce pictures of the inside of the breast. A breast ultrasound can help determine whether a lump is solid, fluid filled or both.

Breast MRI
This exam uses a magnetic field, radio waves and a computer to produce detailed pictures of the inside of the breast. Breast MRI does not use radiation.

Despite concerns about detecting cancer in dense breasts, mammograms are still effective screening tools. You should talk with your doctor about breast density and what impact it might have on your breast screening plan.

To schedule an appointment for a mammogram or a breast ultrasound, call 516.663.2400