

Risk-Reduction Surgeries

A long family history of cancer may put you at a greater risk of contracting the disease. Usually, when cancer is hereditary, a family passes down mutated genes. These genes can become out of control and are likely to cause cancer.

If you do have a long-running history of cancer in your family, you should have regular check-ups with your doctor. Susan G. Komen reports that patients who discover their cancer during Stage I have a 90 percent survival rate. This statistic underscores the importance of staying on top of your health as you age.

One of the keys to beating breast cancer is catching it before it is able to spread to your lymph nodes.

If you are at high risk, there are many options to consider to remain cancer free. Risk-reduction surgeries are becoming a common option for those who are at the highest risk level for breast cancer.

EFFECTIVENESS OF RISK-REDUCTION SURGERY

Bilateral prophylactic mastectomy — the surgery to remove both breasts in order to reduce the risk of breast cancer — has been shown to drop the risk of cancer by 95 percent, according to Cancer.gov.

This surgery is usually meant for women with family histories showing the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene. According to the National Cancer Institute, these two genes account for 20 to 25 percent of hereditary breast cancers.

Your doctor will be able to determine if you have these



gene mutations with a simple blood test, and can then walk you through your options.

RISK INVOLVED

As with all major surgeries, the removal of both breasts is one with many factors to consider. Potential harms that may arise are similar to any major surgery, including major bleeding or infection.

Experts also note that receiving this surgery may cause anxiety concerning body image. Speak with your physician about the psychological side effects while you are deciding to commit to this surgery.

OTHER OPTIONS

If you decide that preventative major surgery is not the

path you want to travel, there are still ways to keep your risk down.

Frequent check-ups will let you and your health professional know exactly where you stand. Talk with your physician or oncologist about how frequently they recommend you be tested.

Chemoprevention is the use of drugs to delay cancer's

development in high-risk patients. The Food and Drug Administration has approved several of these drugs and shows that they will reduce the risk of breast cancer in patients at higher risk.

Again, always consult with your physician to discuss the specifics of your health in relation to starting new drugs or treatments.