



Clinical Champion Update

Date: 12/13/24

Subject: Breast Cancer Risk in Transgender Patients

Breast cancer risk in transgender men

Transgender men who have not undergone bilateral mastectomy, or who have only undergone breast reduction, have the same cancer risk as cisgender women. [1] Mastectomies as part of gender-affirming surgery (top surgery) are often subtotal, particularly in the axillary regions, to obtain an aesthetic, contoured masculine chest. [2] The residual breast tissue has the potential to develop malignancy. Estimation of breast cancer risk reduction in transgender men following simple mastectomy is derived from high-risk cisgender women. There is a <2% risk of breast cancer observed in cisgender women who undergo prophylactic mastectomy due to inherited cancer predisposition. [2] Hence, it is conjectured that transgender men are at a comparably very low risk of developing breast cancer after top surgery.

Age to start screening

The below guidelines are intended to screen transgender men who have the same average risk of breast cancer as cisgender women.

ACR (American College of Radiology)

- Transgender men with bilateral mastectomies at any age and at any risk – no screening.[2]
- Transgender men with reduction mammoplasty or no chest surgery, average risk, 40 years of age or older, annual screening with DBT (diagnostic breast tomosynthesis) or digital mammography. [2]

References

1. <https://transcare.ucsf.edu/guidelines/breast-cancer-men>
2. <https://acsearch.acr.org/docs/3155692/Narrative/>

Breast cancer risk for transgender women

Transgender women have a high prevalence of dense breasts, an independent risk for breast cancer and also a predictor of increased rates of false negative mammograms; a Dutch study of 50 transgender women found that 60% had "dense" or "very dense" breasts on mammography. [1] Data on breast cancer in transgender women has been limited to only a few studies and several case reports. Overall, the data is reassuring with risk possibly lower than the cisgender female population. Transgender women differ from cisgender women in the length of exposure to estrogens as well as variable exposure to progestogens. Recommendations for breast cancer screening in transgender women are typically

based on male sex assigned at birth, the number of years of feminizing hormone exposure (estrogen), breast development, and any significant risk factors for breast cancer. [2]

Age to start screening

This topic remains controversial and the below guidelines are intended to screen transgender women who have the same average risk of breast cancer as cisgender women.

ACR (American College of Radiology)

- If less than 5 years of hormone use and average risk, no testing [3]
- If 5 or more years of hormone use, 40 years or older, and average risk, annual DBT (digital breast tomosynthesis) or mammogram “may be appropriate” [3]

UCSF (University of California San Francisco) Center for transgender Health

- Current recommendations are that screening mammography be performed every 2 years, once the age of 50 and 5-10 years of feminizing hormone use criteria have been met. [3]
- Some providers may choose to discuss the risks and unknowns with patients and delay screening until after up to 10 years of feminizing hormone use, regardless of age. [3]

References

1. Gooren LJ, van Trotsenburg MAA, Giltay EJ, van Diest PJ. Breast cancer development in transsexual subjects receiving cross-sex hormone treatment. *J Sex Med.* 2013 Dec;10(12):3129-34.
2. <https://acsearch.acr.org/docs/3155692/Narrative/>
3. <https://www.breastcancer.org/news/screening-transgender-non-binary>

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