

What is the Gail Score?

You may receive a letter letting you know that a risk assessment was done for you. This assessment is based on your family and personal history. You may be at higher risk for breast cancer. This score is called a Gail score.

The Gail score can estimate your risk of getting invasive breast cancer in the next 5 years. The score is based on your:

- age
- age at first menstrual period
- age at first live birth
- number of first-degree relatives with breast cancer
- number of breast biopsies with abnormal findings

There are many other factors that can increase your risk for breast cancer.

Limits of the Gail Score

The tool does have some limits. It only looks at family history in close relatives (like siblings, parents and children). Scores for Hispanic/Latina, American Indian or Alaskan Native women may not be accurate.

What is considered a high score?

The average risk score for a 60-year-old woman is 1.7. A score of greater than 1.7% is high. Women age 35-79 with a Gail score greater than 1.7% may reduce the risk of developing breast cancer by taking cancer preventing medicines. Your score is _____.

Keep in mind, having risk factors that are linked to a higher risk does not mean that you will definitely develop breast cancer. In fact, most women who have one or more risk factors will never develop breast cancer.

What medicines can help lower my risk of having breast cancer?

The most commonly used medicines to lower breast cancer risk are:

- tamoxifen
- raloxifene
- aromatase inhibitors

These drugs have been shown to decrease the risk for developing hormone positive breast cancer. All medicines have risks and side effects. Talk with your healthcare provider about your total health picture to make the best choice for you.