

## Perspectives on Hereditary Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is a common disease with a 10-12% lifetime risk for women of average risk. Most breast cancers occur in women as they age; 77% occur in women over 50 years old. About 1/3 of women with breast cancer have a family history of breast cancer.

Many women are seen at the Breast Care Center at FAHC for increased surveillance due to a family history of breast cancer. Some women have a family history that is quite compelling, with breast cancer occurring at young ages in close relatives, while for others the history is more distant and the age of onset later. Regardless, all are anxious to determine their personal risk for breast cancer and identify what prevention and screening regimen is most appropriate.

For some women with a strong family history of breast cancer, genetic testing may be a helpful tool in determining breast cancer risk. However, it is important to remember that only 5-10% of all breast cancer is due to the inheritance of a specific genetic mutation.

The most common causes of hereditary breast cancer are mutations in either BRCA1 or

BRCA2. Mutations in these genes can be inherited from either one's mother or father, so a history of breast cancer on either side of the family is relevant to a woman's personal risk for breast cancer.

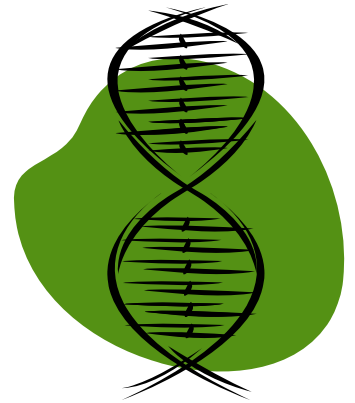
Characteristics of inherited cancers include:

- early age of onset,
- multiple primary cancers in the same individual,
- rare cancers, and
- multiple affected relatives with the same or related type of cancer.

Other cancers associated with mutations in the BRCA genes include: ovarian cancer, male breast cancer, prostate cancer and pancreatic cancer.

While the BRCA genes account for the majority of inherited breast cancer, it is important to remember that there are additional genes that may account for some cases of inherited breast cancer. It is also important to remember that genetic testing is most informative when initiated on an individual who has a cancer diagnosis.

For individuals with a family history of early onset breast



cancer or ovarian cancer at any age, it is appropriate to be referred for genetic counseling. Among women with an inherited gene mutation, their lifetime risk of developing breast cancer can range from 36 - 85% and their lifetime risk of developing ovarian cancer can range from 16 - 60% (compared to a 1.7% risk in women of average risk).

Thus, although hereditary breast cancer accounts for only a small percentage of all breast cancers, inheriting a genetic mutation greatly increases one's risk of breast and ovarian cancer. Determining whether one's family cancer history is likely due to sporadic, familial, or hereditary factors will better guide and individualize breast cancer screening and prevention options.

### Contact Us

#### Program Coordinator:

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#### HRBP Website:

[http://  
hrbp.vermontcancer.org](http://hrbp.vermontcancer.org)

#### HRBP Provider:

802-847-2262

### Genetic Testing And Counseling at FAHC

At Fletcher Allen Health Care you can contact the Familial Cancer Program for more information about genetic counseling and testing for inherited cancer. Currently, this program is one of four sites participating in a randomized clinical trial comparing standard face-to-face genetic counseling with telephone genetic counseling regarding hereditary breast and ovarian cancer. This study is based at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. One has to meet certain eligibility criteria to participate in the study and once enrolled, there is no cost for the genetic counseling sessions. Genetic testing is billed as usual through the testing laboratory. For more information about this study or to contact the Familial Cancer Program, call 802-847-4310.

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HIGH RISK  
BREAST  
PROGRAM  
OF VERMONT

Spring 2008

## A Look at the Participants of the HRBP

Over 360 women throughout Vermont and Northeastern New York have enrolled in the High Risk Breast Program since 2003. The table below provides an overview of some of the demographic and risk characteristics of the population of women in the HRBP.

HRBP Participant Characteristics	
Average Age of Participants	48
Age Range of All Participants	25-80
Participants with a 5 Year Gail Model Risk $\geq$ 2%	166
Participants with a Lifetime Gail Model Risk $\geq$ 20%	117
Participants Identified at Increased Risk Due To:*	
Strong Family History	257
BRCA Genetic Mutation	25
Abnormal Biopsy	62
High Gail Model Risk Only	20
Breast Cancer Cases Since Enrolling in the HRBP	8
Participants with Ovarian Cancer	1
<b>Total Number of Participants in HRBP</b>	<b>364</b>

### Bruschetta with Roasted Red Bell Peppers

- 6 large red bell peppers
- 40 2-inch-diameter 1/2-inch-thick diagonal baguette slices
- 3 1/2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 4 1/2 Tbsp. sliced fresh basil
- 3 large garlic cloves, minced
- 3 garlic cloves, halved

Char peppers in broiler until blackened on all sides. Wrap in paper bag; let stand 10 min. Peel peppers. Set strainer over bowl. Holding peppers over bowl to catch any juices, seed peppers. Cut into thin strips.

Arrange bread on baking sheet. Broil until toasted, about 2 min. Turn bread over. Brush with 1 1/2 Tbsp. oil. Broil until golden, about 2 min.

Add basil, 2 Tbsp. oil and minced garlic to peppers. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Rub oiled side of each bread slice with cut side of garlic halves. Divide peppers among bread slices.

### Scarf Project – Upcoming Venues

The HRBP will be selling scarves knitted and donated by women in Vermont at 2 upcoming events. On Friday, **May 2nd**, the HRBP will be selling scarves at **Isis' annual sample sale** from 10-5 at the Champlain Valley Fair Grounds. On Saturday, **May 3rd**, the HRBP will be selling scarves at the **Stowe Weekend of Hope**.

### Study Information Session

Join us on Wednesday, **May 21st** from 5-6 pm to learn more about the HRBP's research and study participation opportunities. Our Program Coordinator and Principle Investigator will be available to provide information about the HRBP's research studies and answer questions. A past research participant of the statin study will also be available to share her experience with clinical trial participation.

The information session will be on UVM's campus in the Health Science Research Facility Evans Conference Room 200. Please contact Fonda Kingsley to RSVP at 656-8502 or [Fonda.Kingsley@uvm.edu](mailto:Fonda.Kingsley@uvm.edu)

### 8th Annual Stowe Weekend of Hope

The Stowe Weekend of Hope will be held May 2nd through May 4th. It is a weekend retreat for cancer patients, survivors and their families intended to inspire, educate, and celebrate the lives of people living with cancer. Workshops and seminars provide information about new treatments, cancer prevention, support and healing. For more information visit [www.stoweohope.com](http://www.stoweohope.com).

