

## Gail Model– Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool

The Gail Model is a breast cancer risk assessment tool. Using personal risk factors, it helps to determine a woman's risk of developing breast cancer. Each woman's risk of developing breast cancer is different. Personal and family health histories, as well as lifestyle, are factors of breast cancer risk. Knowing your breast cancer risk can help you make decisions about your health.

### **The following information is used to calculate your breast cancer risk:**

**Your age:** Your risk of developing breast cancer increases as you get older.

**Your age when you had your first period:** Starting your period before age 12 slightly increases your breast cancer risk. Starting your period between ages 12 and 13 has no effect on your risk. Starting your period at age 14 or older slightly lowers your breast cancer risk.

**Your age when you had your first live child:** Having your first child at age 30 or older or never having children increases your risk of breast cancer. Having your first child before the age of 30 does not raise your risk of breast cancer.

**The number of your first-degree relatives – mother, sisters or daughters – who have had breast cancer:** Having one or more first-degree relatives who have had breast cancer increases your risk.

**Your history of breast biopsies:** Women who have had biopsies may have an increased risk of breast cancer. If the biopsy found atypical cells (cells that are not typical in nature), your risk of developing breast cancer is greatly increased. The biopsy itself does not increase risk.

**Your race or ethnicity:** Ethnicity has an effect on breast cancer risk. White women have the highest breast cancer rate, followed by African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American women.

### **How accurate are the results?**

The Gail model provides a good estimate of breast cancer risk for most women. It does have some weaknesses. The following list explains these weaknesses:

- The tool may over-estimate the risk of developing breast cancer for certain ethnicities.
- The tool does not ask about all family history of breast cancer, such as grandmothers, aunts or men in the family. Nor does it ask about the age of diagnosis of family members. If you have additional family members with breast cancer, talk with your provider about other tools that might better assess your risk.
- The tool does not estimate the risk of other factors that may influence breast cancer risk, such as age at menopause or use of hormone therapy.

Tell your health care provider if you have a change in your breast health history (for example, a breast biopsy) or if a close relative develops breast cancer. Your risk will be recalculated.

### **Your Calculated Risk Based on the Gail Model Risk Assessment tool your estimated 5-year risk for**

**breast cancer is \_\_\_\_\_ your lifetime risk is \_\_\_\_\_**

If you have an increased risk of breast cancer, talk with your health care provider. He or she can tell you about ways to lower your risk. These may include lifestyle changes and/or medicines to reduce the risk of developing breast cancer.