As you probably already know, breast cancer will strike one in eight women in their lifetime. According to the American Cancer Society, over 230,000 women will be diagnosed with the disease this year, and unfortunately, New Jersey has the highest incidence of breast cancer among non-Hispanic Caucasian women in the US. Of course, great strides have been made to improve treatments and reduce the risk of dying from breast cancer, and one area that is being investigated with great promise is determining a woman’s risk for breast (and ovarian) cancer based on her genetics. Usually, a woman who has one or more of the following risk factors should be considered for genetic testing and counseling:

- A personal or family history of breast cancer diagnosed before age 50
- More than one relative on the same side of the family with breast cancer diagnosed at any age
- A personal or family history of ovarian cancer diagnosed at any age
- Eastern European Jewish (Ashkenazi) ancestry and personal or family history of breast and/or ovarian cancer
- A personal or family history of bilateral breast cancer, male breast cancer, fallopian tube cancer or primary peritoneal cancer
- A personal or family history of both breast and ovarian cancer in the same individual
- A personal history of “triple negative” breast cancer diagnosed before age 60

Additionally, there are a variety of risk assessment tools, the most well-known of which is the Gail model, that are designed for use by medical professionals to help a patient understand her likelihood of developing breast cancer.

At Carol G. Simon Cancer Center, we are committed to diagnosing the disease at the earliest stage possible and providing women with the tools they need to potentially avoid breast cancer entirely. Each of our sites offers a program to provide education, guidance and support for women who do not have breast cancer so they can best determine their risk and the course they should take to remain cancer free or find the disease at the earliest possible interval.

At Morristown Medical Center, we offer the High Risk Surveillance Breast Program, which is a comprehensive, long term program for women identified as having higher risk for breast cancer. As you will see on the enclosed card about the program, based on American Cancer Society recommendations and current managed care guidelines, we have identified criteria for eligible patients and provide
them with a digital screening mammogram, targeted and possible whole breast ultrasound and breast MRI. In addition, patients who qualify receive information and instruction on breast self-examination by a trained nurse, as well as educational materials about breast health, nutrition, and genetic testing.

At Overlook Medical Center, The Breast Cancer Prevention Program assists women in understanding their individual risk factors and how they can decrease their chances of developing breast cancer.

The comprehensive, three-hour prevention visit includes:

- Genetic Screening
- Nutrition/Body Fat Analysis
- Breast Cancer Risk Consultation with a Medical Oncologist

Every patient leaves the visit with a full understanding of her risk of breast cancer and a “plan” for reducing that risk. We’ve also included more information about this program as well.

With both programs, most insurance plans are accepted (insurance coverage for the High Risk Surveillance Program is outlined in the card about the program).

And one last thought…For years now, we’ve known that mammography, though imperfect, is the best tool we have for early detection. According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), mammography will detect about 80-90% of breast cancers in women without symptoms. There has been some recent controversy on the benefits of mammography and when and how often women should get the test, but at Carol G. Simon Center, we are aligned behind the recommendations of the ACS, the American Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG), the Society of Breast Imaging (SBI), and the American College of Radiology (ACR), all of whom recommend annual screening beginning at age 40 for normal risk women. Women at higher risk for breast cancer, as outlined above, should consult with their doctors and begin screening earlier.

Our Breast Centers

Carol W. and Julius A. Rippel Breast Center
Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Morristown Medical Center, 100 Madison Avenue, 3rd Floor, Morristown, NJ 07962. 973.971.5321

The Breast Center at Overlook Medical Center
Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Overlook Medical Center, 99 Beauvoir Avenue, Summit, NJ 07901. 908.522.5762

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