Are you at risk for breast cancer?

The simple truth is that just being a woman puts you at risk for breast cancer. While it’s impossible to know who will get breast cancer and who will not, most cases in the United States can be linked to a handful of known risk factors. Risk factors are those characteristics that can increase your chances of developing breast cancer. Screening for risk factors provides you and your doctor with important information. But risk factors do not work like a scientific crystal ball—they cannot predict your chances of developing breast cancer exactly.

Knowing your risk factors will help you and your doctor evaluate what measures, if any, you should take. Keep in mind, knowing your risk factors does not replace monthly breast self-exams, regular doctor visits or regular mammograms.

The Women’s Center Mammography Department at Clinch Valley Medical Center is accredited by the American College of Radiology and certified by the Food and Drug Administration.

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Core biopsy: A larger needle is used because actual breast tissue is removed, rather than a tiny sampling of cells. A sample of the lump is removed, but not the entire lump. The types of core biopsies include ultrasound-guided core biopsy and stereotactic biopsy.

• Ultrasound-guided core biopsy: This technique obtains breast tissue without surgery. A biopsy needle is placed into the breast tissue. Ultrasound helps confirm correct needle placement — using sound waves reflected off breast tissue — so the exact location of the abnormality is biopsied. Tissue samples are then taken through the needle.

• Stereotactic biopsy: This involves centering the area to be tested in the window of a specially designed instrument. A sterile biopsy needle is placed into the breast tissue area to be biopsied. Computerized pictures help confirm the exact needle placement. Tissue samples are taken through the needle. It is common to take multiple tissue samples.