

# Be breast aware

It's in your hands.



## Consultant Profile

**Name:** Miss Michelle Mullan  
MB ChB BSc (Hons) FRCS  
Consultant Breast Surgeon

**Specialties:**

Breast surgery, Oncology

**Hospital:** BMI The Priory Hospital,  
Birmingham & BMI The Droitwich  
Spa Hospital

Like many diseases, cancer treatment can be at its most effective when the problem is caught early. In this respect, you need the help of the best expert of all – and that's you.

The Priory Breast Clinic offers a 'one-stop' service and provides high quality breast care services. It is staffed by highly experienced consultants and a dedicated Breast Care Nurse Specialist, ensuring you are treated quickly and that you are supported throughout the whole process. Appointments can usually be arranged within 24 hours of referral.



If you've never thought of yourself as a vital weapon in the fight against breast cancer, now's the time to start.

You know your breasts better than anyone. Their shape; how they feel; how they can differ at different times in your cycle. You're therefore perfectly placed to be their best protector, by examining yourself regularly, going for routine check-ups if you're advised to, and talking to your doctor if you find anything out of the ordinary.

Most of us know of someone who has had breast cancer. Around 40,000 women are diagnosed with the disease each year, and in general the risk increases as you get older.

What causes it? It seems to be triggered by a cocktail of factors working together. These can include your own generic history, hormonal factors, diet, exercise, the way you live and environmental factors too.

### How to check yourself

Get into the habit of checking yourself regularly. During a bath or shower is as good an opportunity as any.

The best time to check your breasts is a few days after a period. This is because it's entirely normal for lumps to occur in your breasts during your monthly cycle.

### Check for:

- a change in the size, shape or feel of your breast
- a new lump or thickening in one breast or armpit
- puckering, dimpling or redness of the skin

- changes in the position of the nipple or nipple discharge other than milk
- new pain or discomfort that is only on one side.

### Changes can be normal and harmless

If you do find any change at all, mention it to your GP. Naturally you may feel worried at first but do remember that many changes are entirely normal and due simply to your breasts developing or ageing.

It's also true that most lumps in the breast are actually harmless. Similarly, pain in your breasts during your menstrual cycle is usually nothing to do with the disease.

### Lowering your risk

By following good health and dietary advice – and controlling your intake of some of the usual suspects – you can lower some of the risk factors of contracting breast cancer.

Aim to get your five-a-day of fresh fruit and vegetables. Get out there and do that exercise you always intended to do; even a little at a time is a great start. If you're on the Pill, ask your GP whether it might be advisable to stop by the time you're 30 years old. If you're on HRT, ask whether a shorter spell may be better than continuous treatment for many years.

You may also be interested in advice from the only UK charity dedicated to the prevention of breast cancer: [www.genesisuk.org](http://www.genesisuk.org).

### Screening

All women between the ages of 50 and 70 should receive regular breast screening\*. The NHS should send you an invitation every three years, so do ask if you haven't received yours. The good news is that for people who have treatment following a screening, the success rate is high. You may also be advised that screening is a good idea if you're between 30-50 and have a family history of the disease, or if an immediate relative has been diagnosed. Again, if you're in any doubt have a word with your GP.

### The Priory Breast Clinic

encompasses all aspects of diagnosis and treatment as well as offering state of the art diagnostics, including:

- One of the few Prone Biopsy Tables within the independent sector
- Full Field Digital Mammography
- Nuclear Medicine Department which offers Sentinel Lymph Node localisation and imaging
- Rapid Diagnostic Clinic

For more information on BMI's breast clinics please contact:

**0808 101 0337**



\*The breast screening age is expected to go down by 3 years to 47 and up by 3 years to 73.