

Family history of breast or ovarian cancer is linked to triple-negative breast cancer in women of Mexican descent

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Breast cancer patients of Mexican descent who had a family history of breast or ovarian cancer were almost twice as likely to have triple-negative breast cancer than other subtypes of breast cancer, according to data presented at the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) conference on The Science of Cancer Health Disparities in Racial/Ethnic Minorities and the Medically Underserved, held Nov. 9–12.

"Triple-negative [breast cancer](#) is one of the worst breast cancer subtypes in terms of outcomes," said Maria Elena Martinez, PhD, the Sam M. Walton endowed chair for cancer research and a professor in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine at the University of California San Diego Moores Cancer Center in La Jolla. "So, our finding that family history is related to breast cancer subtype for Hispanic [women](#) of Mexican descent has tremendous implications for breast cancer treatment, screening, and prevention among this population. It not only affects decisions around treatment plans for patients, but extends to screening and prevention plans for family members.

"Before our study, we knew very little about the factors that affect Hispanic/Latina women's risk for breast cancer," Martinez continued. "The Ella Binational Breast Cancer Study was initiated to try and address this issue for Hispanic women of Mexican descent."

Martinez and colleagues found that among 1,150 women of Mexican descent with breast cancer who were enrolled in the Ella Binational Breast Cancer Study, 14.9 percent reported that they had a first-degree relative—parent, sibling, or child—who had received a breast or ovarian cancer diagnosis.

Information about breast tumor-subtype was available for 914 participants. The researchers found that women who reported having a first-degree relative with breast or [ovarian cancer](#) were almost twice as likely to have received a diagnosis of triple-negative breast cancer compared with another breast cancer subtype.

According to Martinez, other researchers have found that the prevalence of deleterious BRCA mutations among Hispanic/Latina women is higher than it is among women of European descent, by as much as 25 percent. She and her colleagues are, therefore, currently investigating whether BRCA mutations might explain the association they see between [family history](#) and triple-negative breast cancer.

Provided by American Association for Cancer Research

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