

Breast cancer gene does not boost risk of death: study

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Young women with the BRCA gene mutation that prompted actress

Angelina Jolie's pre-emptive and much-publicised double mastectomy are not more likely to die after a breast cancer diagnosis, scientists said Friday.

In fact, they may have a "survival advantage" over non-carriers if diagnosed with triple-negative breast [cancer](#), a form that is particularly hard to treat, a team wrote in the journal *The Lancet Oncology*.

"Women diagnosed with early breast cancer who carry a BRCA mutation are often offered double mastectomies soon after their diagnosis or chemotherapy treatment" compared to non-mutation carriers, study co-author Diana Eccles of the University of Southampton said in a statement.

"Our findings suggest that this surgery does not have to be immediately undertaken along with the other treatment."

According to the American Cancer Society, women with a mutation in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes have a seven-in-10 chance of getting breast cancer by the age of 80. They are also more likely to get it at a younger age than other women.

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For the new study, Eccles and a team recruited 2,733 British women aged 18-40 who had been diagnosed with breast cancer between 2000 and 2008.

Twelve percent of the women had a BRCA mutation.

The team tracked the women's medical records for an average period of

just over eight years, and found that 651 of 678 total deaths were due to breast cancer.

"The study found that there was no difference in overall survival two, five or ten years after diagnosis for women with and without a BRCA mutation," a press statement said.

In a subgroup of women with [triple-negative breast cancer](#), those with a BRCA mutation had slightly higher survival rates for the first two years after diagnosis.

"In light of their findings the authors suggest that women with triple-negative [breast cancer](#) and a BRCA mutation who choose to delay additional surgery for 1-2 years to recover from their initial treatment should be reassured that this is unlikely to affect their long-term survival," the statement said.

"However, risk-reducing surgery will still likely be beneficial for BRCA mutation carriers to prevent another new breast or ovarian cancer from developing in the longer term."

While only about five percent of [breast](#) cancers are diagnosed in [women](#) younger than 40, a high proportion of deaths fall in this age category.

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