



SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE
Researching the Environment and Women's Health



EARLY-ONSET BREAST CANCER PROGRAM

Research Saves Lives



Research on chemical exposures in young women *will help all women.*



THE STAKES: Young Women, Their Families, Their Careers

It's all too common.

It used to be that women didn't have to worry about a life-altering diagnosis like breast cancer until they were much older. Now, breast cancer is striking young women in their 20s, 30s, and 40s at unprecedented rates...just as they're launching careers and starting families.

And although more women are surviving breast cancer thanks to advances in medicine, it takes a toll: physically, emotionally, and economically. Women who go through treatment can face long-term health problems including other cancers.

The statistics are alarming.

Global cases of early-onset cancers have risen sharply in recent decades and are projected to keep increasing in the years ahead. Two-thirds of people diagnosed with cancer under age 50 are women. Overwhelmingly, most of those cases are breast cancer. What's more, Black women are more likely to be diagnosed younger and about twice as likely to develop aggressive forms of the disease.

It's unacceptable.

THE PROBLEM:

Toxic Chemicals Hiding in Plain Sight

While we at Silent Spring Institute have long championed environmental research, too many others focus exclusively on lifestyle risk factors such as women having fewer children, obesity, and alcohol.

The data tell a different story.

Breast cancer is rising even in countries with high rates of fertility and low rates of obesity and alcohol consumption. Mounting evidence points to the hundreds of hormone-disrupting chemicals in our daily products. We're finding:

- Toxic chemicals in clothes and furniture
- Toxic chemicals in cookware, food packaging, and plastics
- Toxic chemicals in beauty products
- Toxic chemicals in drinking water

Research saves lives.

Decades of investment in breast cancer research have transformed treatment and helped people live longer. Yet prevention research has received far less funding.

Most studies focus on treatment, genetics, and lifestyle — and when they do examine environmental exposures, they often look too late in life, missing critical early periods when the breast is most vulnerable.

If we invested in prevention the way we invest in treatments, **we could save more lives** — by helping women avoid a breast cancer diagnosis in the first place.



“What’s becoming increasingly clear is that environmental exposures — toxic chemicals in the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the products we use — are likely driving this trend in early-onset breast cancer.”

– Mary Beth Terry, PhD,
Executive Director



THE SOLUTION: Focus on Young Women

Most breast cancer research has focused on older women. But that data can be muddled by the biological effects of aging. We must do better.

Timing is everything.

There are critical times in a woman's life when her breast tissue is especially vulnerable to toxic chemicals: during development in the womb, puberty, pregnancy, and menopause. In these *windows of susceptibility*, the breast undergoes rapid growth and hormonal changes — making it particularly sensitive to endocrine disrupting chemicals.

Most human studies measure exposures years or decades *after* these windows.

We can change that. By measuring levels of harmful chemicals in people's bodies *during* critical windows, especially puberty and pregnancy, we can pinpoint which exposures are driving early-onset breast cancer.

We must act now.

Thanks to people like you, the research tools we have now are more sophisticated than ever. We can measure multiple chemicals in our air, dust, water, and everyday products. We can measure and analyze multiple chemicals in our blood. Now we need your help to use these tools in well-designed studies on the right population of women: *young women*.

By studying a younger population, we can uncover answers that will address rising rates of breast cancer in young women...and benefit all women.

WHY SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE?



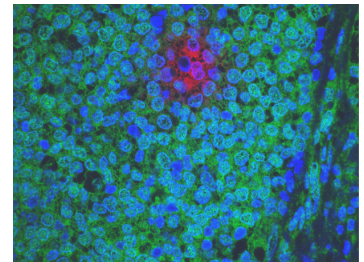
For more than 30 years, Silent Spring has developed a track record of doing high-quality science that has significant, lasting impact. We are the leading experts on toxic environmental exposures that harm women’s health. We have the innovative tools and know-how to drive change for a future that’s far healthier for women and their families.

Already we have: _____

- ✓ helped Washington become the first state to **ban formaldehyde-releasing preservatives** from cosmetics
- ✓ spurred the enactment of **federal drinking water standards** for PFAS chemicals
- ✓ prompted state and federal laws that allowed companies to make furniture without **cancer-causing flame retardants**
- ✓ inspired **bans on toxic chemicals in food packaging** in a dozen states
... and more

This is what you help us do:

- Uncover environmental causes of breast cancer
- Identify exposures and other avoidable risk factors
- Equip lawmakers, doctors, women, and their families with the knowledge they need – so we can all stay safe and healthy



We channel our righteous anger...

In 1964, when Rachel Carson wrote her groundbreaking book *Silent Spring* about the devastation caused by toxic chemicals in the environment, she was rightfully angry.

In 1994, when a group of breast cancer activists – frustrated by decades of research that failed to stem the tide of breast cancer – took matters into their own hands by forming Silent Spring Institute, they were rightfully angry.

Today, we’re rightfully angry that our regulatory system lets companies evade critical safety testing, allowing dangerous chemicals to end up in the products we use every day.

Our anger forges action, hope, and progress.

Silent Spring is the nation’s leading independent scientific research organization dedicated to breast cancer prevention.



“Silent Spring has identified hundreds of chemicals in everyday products that can disrupt hormones in ways that put women’s health at risk. Black women, in particular, are more exposed to some of these chemicals, which may contribute to disparities in breast cancer and other health outcomes. Addressing these disparities requires identifying and eliminating the most dangerous sources of exposure.”

– Elissia Franklin, PhD,
Research Scientist

YOU ARE CRUCIAL

You understand the problem, the stakes, and the urgency.

You know that research historically has not prioritized women’s health. A 2024 report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine found only 8.8% of NIH research funding goes to women’s health, and federal budget cuts have threatened to shrink that even further.

In 2025, we created the Early-Onset Breast Cancer Program. This program is the next chapter in our history. It brings decades of scientific leadership to the urgent crisis facing young women today, with an approach that in time will help all women.

We need your support to move this program forward.

When we join together for a common cause, we can move mountains. Together, we can:

- Investigate how exposures to PFAS during adolescence alter breast tissue in ways that could lead to cancer later on
- Pinpoint unique exposures driving health disparities among Black women
- Uncover how environmental chemicals affect cancer treatments and the risk of secondary cancers
- Make connections with other diseases including chronic illnesses
- Combine environmental exposure assessments with genetic testing at breast clinics, giving high-risk women comprehensive personalized risk profiles
- Translate research findings into clinical practice by equipping doctors with science-based medical guidance
- Provide actionable tips to help women reduce their exposures and lower their cancer risk
- Change national cancer prevention guidelines to recognize environmental chemicals as modifiable risk factors



THE TIME IS NOW

The need for early-onset breast cancer research is urgent. With your help, we'll *identify the drivers* of early-onset breast cancer, *reduce the global burden* of breast cancer, and *promote healthier lives* for women everywhere.

“ We know what science needs to be done to curb this devastating trend. This research must continue and the data put in the hands of decision-makers as soon as humanly possible.”

– Mary Beth Terry, PhD, Executive Director

Decades ago, a courageous group of women rallied to form Silent Spring Institute.

Today, it's high time we rally once again to turn the tide of early-onset breast cancer.

We won't make significant progress from here unless and until we focus on the harmful chemicals entering our bodies without our knowledge... *without our consent.*

We envision a future where young women can start families, build careers, and plan ahead without the shadow of breast cancer. A future where parents don't have to worry about invisible chemicals harming their daughters. A future where the places we gather and the things we use are safe. This future is possible. But we can't build it without you.

Right now, early-onset breast cancer is *all too common.*
With your help, it will be *history.*

“Our work has been instrumental in pushing the science into spaces where it can make a difference. In order to lift the global burden of breast cancer, especially in young women who are increasingly affected, we need global action to reduce environmental exposures that are contributing to the disease.”

– Jennifer Kay, PhD, Research Scientist



SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE
Researching the Environment and Women's Health

**For more information
and to make a gift, contact**

Quinn Fey
617.332.4288 ext. 222
fey@silentspring.org

**For media inquiries,
contact**

Alexandra Goho
617.332.4288 ext. 232
goho@silentspring.org