

Mutations in the BRCA 1 and BRCA 2 genes can increase a woman's risk of breast cancer by 60 to 80 percent. According to the National Cancer Institute, preventive mastectomy can reduce the risk of developing breast cancer in moderate- and high-risk women by 90 percent. But there is no guarantee that the procedure will completely protect a woman. Breast tissue can sometimes be found in the collarbone or chest wall, for example. And like any surgery, there is a risk of infection or excessive bleeding. Myriad Genetics owns the patents for these gene tests, which cost between \$3,000 to \$4,000 each. In April the U.S. Supreme Court took up the issue of whether human DNA can be the subject of a patent and a decision in the case is expected next month. Experts believe a decision against Myriad would help reduce the cost of the tests and increase access. For women with private insurance, the cost of treatment is usually covered, especially if they test positive for a BRCA mutation. President Barack Obama's health law made coverage of the BRCA test mandatory as a preventive health service since August 2012. New health plans that will be offered to millions of uninsured Americans in October must also cover the service for free.