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[Study at Sheffield](#)
[For Current Students](#)
[For Staff](#)
[Our Research](#)
[Departments & Services](#)
[Useful Links](#)
[News & Events](#)

You are here: [Home](#) / [Departments](#) / [SRAM](#) / [Media Centre](#) / [News Releases 2009](#)

[Media Centre home](#)

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[News Releases](#)

Sheffield expert to study breast cancer risk in women

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A researcher at the University of Sheffield is to investigate whether women with a mutation in a gene that prevents folate (vitamin B9) working effectively, may be at increased risk of breast cancer.

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[The University in the Media](#)

Professor Hilary Powers, from the [School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences](#) at the University of Sheffield has been awarded a pilot grant by [Breast Cancer Campaign](#) to study the impact of this gene, as well as its interaction with diet and lifestyle, on the risk of breast cancer. The grant forms part of £2 million awarded to 20 projects in the UK and Ireland.

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It is acknowledged that diet and lifestyle can affect the risk of breast cancer, but the extent to which mutations in our genes can influence the usefulness of nutrients in the diet and have an impact on risk is unclear.

In the laboratory Professor Powers and her team will create breast cells containing the mutated gene MTHFR which they believe stops folate from working effectively, increasing the risk that cells will become malignant.

Professor Powers said: "We are grateful for this funding from Breast Cancer Campaign. This study should provide vital information about how this gene, together with a person's diet and lifestyle affect breast cancer risk. Strategies could then be developed to reduce the breast cancer risk of women carrying this gene mutation."

Arlene Wilkie, Director of Research and Policy, Breast Cancer Campaign said: "There are many different genes which are important in both the development and treatment of breast cancer. Identifying them and finding out more about their role is a vital area of breast cancer research."

Notes for Editors: Professor Powers was awarded a grant of nearly £17,000 from Breast Cancer Care.

Breast Cancer Campaign aims to beat breast cancer by funding innovative world-class research to understand how breast cancer develops, leading to improved diagnosis, treatment, prevention and cure. Currently it supports 115 research projects, worth almost £16 million, in 44 centres of excellence across the UK and Ireland

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK and accounts for nearly one in three of all cancers in women. In the UK, nearly 46,000 new cases of breast cancer are diagnosed each year.

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[« Return to news releases](#)

