



# HealthyPeople

## BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Finding breast cancer early and getting state-of-the-art treatment are the most important ways to prevent deaths from breast cancer. Breast cancer that's found early is easier to treat successfully. **Regular screening tests are the best way to find breast cancer early.** The American Cancer Society has screening guidelines for women at average risk of breast cancer, and for those at higher-than-average risk.

### WHAT ARE SCREENING TESTS?

The goal of these tests is to find cancer before it causes symptoms (like a lump that can be felt). Breast cancers found during screening exams are more likely to be smaller and still confined to the breast. The size of a breast cancer and how far it has spread are some of the most important factors in predicting the outlook of a woman with this disease.

### FOR WOMEN AT AVERAGE RISK

These guidelines are for women at average risk for breast cancer. A woman at average risk doesn't have a personal history of breast cancer, a strong

family history of breast cancer, or a genetic mutation known to increase risk of breast cancer (such as BRCA), and has not had chest radiation therapy before the age of 30. Women between 40 and 44 have the option to start screening with a mammogram every year.

- Women 45 to 54 should get mammograms every year.
- Women 55 and older can switch to a mammogram every other year, or they can choose to continue yearly mammograms. Screening should continue as long as a woman is in good health and is expected to live 10 more years or longer.
- All women should understand what to expect when getting a mammogram for breast cancer screening – what the test can and cannot do.



## TYPES OF SCREENINGS AND TESTS

### MAMMOGRAMS

Regular mammograms can help find breast cancer at an early stage, when treatment is most successful. A mammogram can find breast changes that could be cancer years before physical symptoms develop. Results from many decades of research clearly show that women who have regular mammograms are more likely to have breast cancer found early, are less likely to need aggressive

treatment like surgery to remove the breast (mastectomy) and chemotherapy, and are more likely to be cured. Mammograms are not perfect. They miss some cancers. And sometimes a woman needs more tests to find out if something found on a mammogram is or is not cancer. It's important that women getting mammograms know what to expect and understand the benefits and limitations of screening.

### CLINICAL EXAMS AND SELF EXAMS

Research has not shown a clear benefit of physical breast exams done by either a health professional or by yourself for breast cancer screening. There is very little evidence that these tests help find breast cancer early when women also get screening mammograms. Because of this, a regular clinical breast exam and breast self-exam are not recommended. Still, all women should be familiar with how their breasts normally look and feel and report any changes to a health care provider right away.

Source: American Cancer Society

