



TAKECHARGE

WELCOA'S SELF-CARE BULLETIN

BREAST CANCER SCREENINGS:

Know When & What You Should Get

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, so it's a great time to make sure you're doing everything you can to properly screen and prevent this disease. Breast cancer occurs mainly in women, but men can get it too as they also have breast tissue, just less of it.

BREAST CANCER SCREENINGS

Breast cancer screenings mean checking a person's breasts for cancer before there are signs or symptoms of the disease. Although breast cancer screenings cannot prevent breast cancer, they can help find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat. Talk to your doctor about which breast cancer screening tests are right for you, and when you should have them. All women should be informed by their healthcare provider about the best screening options for them. Men who have a strong family history of breast cancer should discuss how to manage their risk with their doctor.

TYPES OF SCREENINGS

There are several types of breast cancer screenings. A **mammogram** is an X-ray of the breast. For many, mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat and before it is big enough to feel or cause symptoms. Having regular mammograms can lower the risk of dying from breast cancer. At this time, a mammogram is the best way to find breast cancer.



A **breast MRI** uses magnets and radio waves to take pictures of the breast. MRI is used along with mammograms to screen those who are at high risk for getting breast cancer. Because breast MRIs may appear abnormal even when there is no cancer, they are not used for those with average risk.

A **clinical breast exam** is an examination by a doctor or nurse, who uses his or her hands to feel for lumps or other changes. Additionally, being familiar with how your breasts look and feel can help you notice symptoms such as lumps, pain, or changes in size that may be of concern. These could include changes found during a **breast self-exam**. You should report any changes that you notice to your doctor or health care provider.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) is an organization made up of doctors and disease experts who look at research on the best way to

prevent diseases and make recommendations on how doctors can help patients avoid diseases or find them early. The USPSTF recommends that women who are 50 to 74 years old and are at average risk for breast cancer get a mammogram every two years. Women who are 40 to 49 years old should talk to their doctor or other health care professional about when to start and how often to get a mammogram. Women should weigh the benefits and risks of screening tests when deciding whether to begin getting mammograms before age 50.

Currently, the best strategies for reducing the number of deaths caused by this disease are early detection and prompt treatment. Unfortunately, early detection has been a problem for men, who may not notice breast lumps or see their doctor only when the lumps have gotten large. In general, men are diagnosed with breast cancer at more advanced stages than women.

You can get screened for breast cancer at a clinic, hospital, or doctor's office. If you want to be screened for breast cancer, call your doctor's office. They can help you schedule an appointment. Most health insurance plans are required to cover screening mammograms every one to two years for women beginning at age 40 with no out-of-pocket cost (like a co-pay, deductible, or co-insurance).



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.