

Let's Talk About It

Screening for Breast Cancer

We all want better ways to find breast cancer early and save lives from this disease. Breast cancer screening can help to detect cancer early when it's most treatable. This guide is meant to help you and your healthcare professional understand the benefits and risks of breast cancer screening, including what age to start screening and how often people should be screened. **This guide is NOT for women who have a BRCA genetic variation, a history of chest radiation, or who have had breast cancer.** These women should talk to their healthcare professional about how best to stay healthy.



The good news is getting screened for breast cancer every other year can reduce your risk of dying from this disease.

This guidance is for women and people assigned female at birth who:

- have no signs or symptoms of breast cancer
- are 40 to 74 years old
- are at an average risk of developing breast cancer, as well as those who have dense breasts or a family history of breast cancer

Breast Cancer and Its Impact

Breast cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death for women in the U.S. Each year, there are about 240,000 cases diagnosed and unfortunately, nearly 43,000 women will die from breast cancer.

Notably, Black women are 40% more likely to die from breast cancer than White women, even though they get breast cancer at a roughly similar rate. Black women more often get aggressive cancers at younger ages.

What You Need to Know About Breast Cancer Screening

- Breast cancer screening can find cancer early when it's easier to treat, improve your quality of life, and reduce your risk of dying from breast cancer.
- Breast cancer screening is most commonly performed with digital mammography or digital breast tomosynthesis, also known as 3D mammography. Both are effective ways to screen for breast cancer.
- Getting screened every other year maximizes the benefit of screening while minimizing related harms. These harms can include being told you might have cancer when you don't—or being told you don't have cancer when you do, as well as receiving treatment that was not needed.
- Due to existing and persistent inequities, certain racial and ethnic groups, people with lower incomes, and rural communities are more likely to have poor health outcomes and die from breast cancer.
- Equitable and appropriate follow-up care and effective treatment for all women diagnosed with breast cancer is vital to realizing the life-saving value of breast cancer screening.

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For Some Women There's More to Consider

While the evidence is clear that all women 40 to 74 should have a mammogram every other year, there are some areas where the research is limited and clinical judgment and patient medical history, values, and preferences play a role in decision making.

- **Women with Dense Breasts:** Women find out if they have dense breasts after a mammogram. Women with dense breasts have a higher chance of getting breast cancer and that risk increases the more dense your breasts are. While having dense breasts means that mammograms may not work as well, it's important to still get screened. More research is needed on how to better find breast cancer in women with dense breasts, whether that is by adding an ultrasound, an MRI, or something else entirely.



What can be done? Healthcare professionals can share information on the benefits and harms of additional screening methods to help women with dense breasts decide what is best for them.

- **Women 75 and Older:** Studies very rarely included women 75 and older, so the evidence is not clear about whether they should continue or stop screening.



What can be done? Healthcare professionals and women 75 and older may consider factors such as overall health and previous screening history when deciding whether to continue or stop screening.



Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Professional



- 1 Which screening method is right for me?
- 2 What happens after an abnormal mammogram?
- 3 When should I stop screening?
- 4 How else can I reduce my risk of breast cancer?
- 5 How does my family history and other risk factors affect when I should get breast cancer screening?

So What Does This Mean?

All women should get screened for breast cancer every other year starting at age 40. There is not enough evidence to decide whether to continue or stop screening in women 75 and older and what more should be done to screen for breast cancer in women with dense breasts.

To learn more, view the full USPSTF [Breast Cancer Screening](#) recommendation. Related, the USPSTF also has recommendations on [BRCA-Related Cancer Prevention](#) and [Medication Use to Reduce Risk of Breast Cancer](#).