

Early Detection Boosts Breast Cancer Survival Rates

Women of all ages and ethnicities should have access to mammograms



TO SCHEDULE YOUR SCREENING MAMMOGRAM TODAY:
Merrimack Valley Hospital:
 978.521.8121
Holy Family Hospital:
 978-722-3800

After years of controversy over mammogram guidelines some women continue to get annual mammograms as it remains the best tool in breast cancer detection. But more needs to be done to increase access to mammogram screenings. According to statistics from the American Cancer Society, only 46 percent of all women ages 40-49, 56 percent of women ages 50-64, and 49 percent of women 65 and older report having had a mammogram within the past year.

That percentage decreases with ethnicity, level of education, immigration status and lack of health insurance coverage.

According to The National Health Survey, only 51 percent of white women reported having a mammogram within the last year, 50 percent of African American women, 47 percent of Asian women, 46 percent of Hispanic women, 26 percent of women who immigrated to the United States less than 10 years ago, and 16 percent of women without health insurance. And 37 percent of women with an average of 11 years of education report having a mammogram within the past year compared to 57 percent of women with an education level of 16 years or more.

Mammograms are important because breast cancer screening has been shown to reduce breast cancer mortality.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) reports that in the United States death rates from breast cancer in women have been declining since 1990 due in part to early detection by mammography screening, and improvements in treatment. Currently, 60 percent of breast cancers are diagnosed early when patients have a five-year survival rate of 98 percent, so it is important to eliminate any barriers that prohibit women from getting screening

mammograms in order to detect breast cancer at its earliest stages when it is most treatable.

Prior to 2009 it was recommended that all women age 40 and older get mammograms every one to two years. Then the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force issued new guidelines stating that women younger than 50 do not need a routine annual mammogram, and those 50 to 74 could get screened every two years.

The new guidelines ignited debate about whether delayed screening would increase breast cancer mortality. Since then, organizations such as the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute have adhered to the earlier recommendations that women 40 and older be screened annually. Holy Family Hospital and Merrimack Valley Hospital adhere to those recommendations.

“Age is the major risk factor - risk goes up as you get older. It begins to increase at age 30 and women are at a steep part of the curve between ages 40 and 50,” said Steward Medical Group Surgeon Kathryn Hughes, MD, who recommends annual mammograms for women 40 and older

along with clinical breast exams and breast self-exam.

It is important for women 40 and older to know that they **do not need a referral from their health care provider to schedule a routine annual mammogram** - they can call and schedule the appointment themselves. And some insurances will also cover a baseline mammogram prior to age 40.

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Steward Medical Group
 Surgeon Kathryn Hughes, MD.

Chances of being diagnosed with Breast Cancer By Age

20	1 in 1,760
30	1 in 229
40	1 in 69
50	1 in 42
60	1 in 29
70	1 in 27

***Overall life span risk is 1 in 8**

Source: National Cancer Institute

Holy Family Hospital's and Merrimack Valley Hospital's digital mammography equipment possess valid licenses and certifications of inspection from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and are accredited by the American College of Radiology.