



Breast Health – What you should know

Early detection saves lives! Screening tests can find breast cancer in its earlier stages, when the cancer treatment is easier and the chances of survival are highest. But, there are also things you can do to help improve your chances of early detection and lower your risk.

During our community outreach women often asked “How can I protect myself from getting breast cancer?” We can best answer this question by helping you with these four easy steps to lower your risk of breast cancer.

1. Know (and understand) Your Risk

Talk to your family to learn about your family health history and, talk to your health care provider about your personal risk of breast cancer.

Risk factors do not cause breast cancer, but they increase the chances that you may get breast cancer. There are many risk factors linked to breast cancer. Some of these risk factors increase risk a lot. Others increase risk by only a little.

2. Get Screened

Ask your health care provider which screening tests are right for you if you are at a higher risk. We recommend women have a mammogram every year starting at age 40 if you are at average risk. Additionally, we recommended a clinical breast exam at least every three years starting at the age of 20, and every year starting at age 40.

The best screening tool we have today for early breast cancer detection is the mammogram. A mammogram can find breast cancer when it is small and easier to treat. Sometimes breast cancer can be felt, but not seen on a mammogram. This is why the clinical breast exam is equally important in your cancer prevention routine.

3. Know Your Normal

Learn how your breasts normally look and feel and report any changes to your health care provider.

Perform a Breast Self-Assessment monthly. Preferably 72-hours after the last day of your menstrual cycle. If you no longer have menstrual cycle, then pick the same date each month.

Download The Five Steps of a Breast Self-Exam PDF from [breastcancer.org](http://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/testing/types/self_exam/bse_steps) The direct link is: http://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/testing/types/self_exam/bse_steps

There is no “standard” breast size, shape or feel. Each person is unique. So, it’s important to become familiar with the way your breasts normally look and feel. Knowing what is normal for you may help you see or feel changes in your breasts.

If you notice any change from your normal, see your health care provider. It’s important to note that the warning signs of breast cancer are not the same for all women.

The most common symptoms are: a lump, hard knot or thickening inside the breast or underarm area; swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast; change in the size or shape of the breast; dimpling or puckering of the skin; itchy, scaly or sore rash on the nipple, pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast; nipple discharge that starts suddenly; new pain in one spot that does not go away.

4. Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Add exercise into your routine
- Limit alcohol intake
- Limit post-menopausal hormone use
- Breastfeed, if you can

Healthy lifestyle choices are about taking responsibility and making smart health choices for today and for your future. Eating right, getting physically fit, emotional wellness, spiritual wellness and prevention are all a part of creating a healthy lifestyle.

For more information on mammogram screening or our Breast Health outreach program resources please call Angelia Freeman, Program Manager at 541-672-0072 or email Angelia at AFreeman@CCCRoseburg.org

What All Women Should Know About Breast Health

What Is Breast Cancer?

Cells in the body normally divide (reproduce) only when new cells are needed. Sometimes, cells grow and divide out of control, which creates a mass of tissue called a tumor. If the cells that are growing out of control are normal cells, the tumor is called benign (not cancerous.) If however, the cells that are growing out of control are abnormal and does not function like the body's normal cells, the tumor is called malignant (cancerous).

What Causes Breast Cancer?

We do not know what causes breast cancer, although we do know that certain risk factors may put you at higher risk of developing it. A person's age, genetic factors, gender, personal health history and diet all contribute to breast cancer risk.

Who Gets Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women, other than skin cancer. It is the second leading cause of cancer death in women, after lung cancer. About 215,990 women in the United States will be found to have invasive breast cancer in 2004. About 40,110 women will die from the disease this year. Right now there are slightly over 2 million women living in the U.S. who have been treated for breast cancer. (Source: American Cancer Society) Although this may sound frightening, research reveals that breast cancer death rates are going down. This decline is likely the result of earlier detection and improved treatment.

Mammogram Basics

Using a machine and x-ray film made especially for breast tissue; a technician compresses the breast and takes pictures from at least two different angles, creating a set of images for each of your breasts. This set of images is called a mammogram. Breast tissue appears white and opaque and fatty tissue appears darker and translucent. In a screening mammogram, the breast is x-rayed from top to bottom and from side to side. A diagnostic mammogram focuses in on a particular lump or area of abnormal tissue.

Why Do I Need A Mammogram?

Mammography is your best defense against breast cancer because it can detect the disease in its early stages, before it can be felt during a breast examination. Mammograms can evaluate any unusual changes in the breast. A mammogram can help your healthcare provider decide if a lump, growth or change in your breast needs further testing.

How Should I Prepare For A Mammogram?

Inform your health care provider or the technician performing the test if you are pregnant or think that you may be.

No dietary changes are necessary. Take your medicines as usual.

Do not wear body powder, cream, deodorant or lotion on your chest the day of the test. These substances may interfere with the x-rays.

You will be asked to remove all clothing above the waist and you will be given a gown to wear. You may want to wear a two-piece outfit the day of the test. And, you will be asked to remove all jewelry.

What Should I Expect During My Mammogram?

A registered mammography technologist performs the test (all DIA mammography techs are women). A certified DIA radiologist specialized in interpreting imaging studies will read the x-rays.

You will be asked to stand in front of an X-ray machine. A technician will place your breast between two radiographic breast supports. The supports will be pressed together, gently flattening the breast. By compressing the breast, the health-care provider can get a clear picture while using a low dose of radiation. The discomfort felt from this pressure will only last for a few seconds. Compression is necessary to obtain the clearest possible picture with the least amount of radiation. To minimize discomfort during compression, you may want to schedule your appointment seven to 10 days after the start of your period, when your breasts are least likely to be tender.

The breast will be imaged in several positions to enable the radiologist to visualize all breast tissue adequately. For a routine breast screening, two pictures are taken of each breast. This examination takes about 20 minutes.

What is Digital Mammography?

The local outpatient imaging offers this state-of-the-art technology so that patients receive the extraordinary care they deserve. Digital mammography makes it possible for images to be transferred to a computer screen so they can be electronically enhanced. Your doctor can zoom in, magnify and optimize different parts of the breast tissue. This improves readability and interpretation of your images. Also, digital allows images to be stored and transferred electronically (no film).



Oregon Health Authority **FREE HEALTH SCREENING AVAILABLE IN OREGON**

Breast Cancer, Cervical Cancer, & Genetics Services

1-877-255-7070

Local ScreenWise Provider: Accent on Women's Health 541-677-4427



You may qualify for FREE screening services if you:

- Are age 21-50 and need breast or cervical screening services
- Live in Oregon
- Have a household income at or below 250% FPL
- Have no or insufficient health insurance