

NEWS BRIEF

Health Panel Drops Breast Cancer Screening Age to 40



On April 30, 2024, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) [recommended](#) that women get a mammogram every other year starting at age 40 and continuing until they are 74. Nearly one year after this screening guidance was drafted in May 2023, the health panel's recommendations have been finalized without major changes.

This latest advice from the USPSTF, a group of independent disease prevention and medical experts, is somewhat of a reversal. In 2009, the health panel raised the age for starting routine mammograms from 40 to 50. At that time, health experts were concerned that earlier screening would do more harm than good. However, new research reveals that breast cancer rates among women in their 40s are on the rise, supporting the expanded recommendation.

The rate of breast cancer among women ages 40-49 increased by an average of 2% each year from 2015-19, according to the National Cancer Institute.

The American Cancer Society reports that breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among women. About 42,000 women and 500 men die from the disease each year. However, breast cancer is treatable when caught early, and mammograms—X-ray images of breasts—are a reliable screening test. The latest medical evidence suggests that every other year screening of breast tissue provides a “moderate net benefit” for women up to age 74 and can help save lives.

What's Next?

Health experts stress that if all women follow the new recommendation of starting routine mammograms at the age of 40, it could save about 8,000 American lives each year. The guidance applies to all women who are asymptomatic and at average risk for breast cancer, including those with dense breast tissue and a family history of breast cancer.

Contact your doctor if you have questions about mammograms or your health history.

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