

What You Need To Know About...

What You Need to Know About Mammograms and Breast Cancer

What Do I Need to Know?

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the United States. In 2001, an estimated 192,200 American women were diagnosed with breast cancer for the first time and 40,200 women died from the disease. If you are 40 or older, you are at risk for breast cancer. A mammogram every 1-2 years can help find this disease early and can lower your chances of dying of breast cancer.

Who Should Have Regular Mammograms?

The higher your risk of breast cancer, the more likely you are to benefit from regular mammograms. Your risk of breast cancer increases with your age after age 40. Among other factors that increase your risk is having a sister or mother who has breast cancer.

Are There Any Drawbacks to Mammograms?

Mammograms may not find all breast cancers. Also, they may suggest that you have cancer when you really do not. These false-positive results could lead to unnecessary tests or surgery.

What Should I Do?

Ask your doctor, nurse, or other health care provider whether you should have regular mammograms and how often.

The *What You Need To Know* series provides a summary of recommendations from the work of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The USPSTF is an independent panel of experts in the fields of family medicine, obstetrics-gynecology, pediatrics, nursing, prevention research, and psychology. The Task Force reviews research on a wide range of preventive services, including screening, counseling, and using medications to prevent disease, then makes recommendations for the public.

This fact sheet is part of **Put Prevention Into Practice** (PIIP), a national program sponsored by AHRQ to increase the delivery of USPSTF-recommended clinical preventive services in the primary care setting. For more information about PIIP and PIIP tools, search the AHRQ Web site at

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