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## Breast Cancer – An Early Diagnosis Can Give You the Gift of Time

Breast cancer is the most common cancer found in women of all races and ethnicities around the world. In fact, in the U.S., **1 in 8 women will get breast cancer** at some point in her life. With early detection and new treatments, chances for survival increase. That's why it's so important for women to stay current on screening mammograms. A screening is just like wearing a seatbelt when you drive or a helmet when you ride a bike. Mammograms save lives by detecting cancer early, allowing for more treatment options and a better chance of recovery.

### Updated mammography guidelines

**The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)** recently suggested that women with normal risk should start getting a mammogram every two years starting at age 40, instead of age 50. They recommend continuing this screening until age 75.

Clinical trials over the years have shown that regular screening mammograms help reduce deaths from breast cancer. Predictive modeling suggests that if all women get screened from ages 40 to 74, an additional 1.3 deaths from breast cancer could be prevented for every 1,000 women screened in their lifetime. The benefits are even greater for Black women in the U.S., who often get diagnosed when their cancer is more advanced. If they start screenings at age 40, 1.8 more deaths could be avoided for every 1,000 women screened in their lifetime.

### Early detection and survival rates

**Breast cancer treatment and survival** is one of the great stories in modern medicine. Today, 90 out of 100 women are still alive five years after being diagnosed with breast cancer, regardless of when they were diagnosed. If the disease is found early, 99 out of 100 women are alive five years after diagnosis. *Catching it early is key.*

### Advances in treatment

Shifts in breast cancer treatment have helped decrease unnecessary removals of breasts. Starting in the 1970s, research has shown that removing only the tumor and following it with radiation provided the same survival rates as completely removing the breast for early-stage breast cancer. This dramatically changes the experience of being diagnosed with breast cancer. Research examples include:

- A 1990 study by the **U.S. National Institutes of Health**
- A **2021 study in Sweden**

If the breast does need to be removed, there are many options for reconstruction to help women regain their sense of self after surgery. TRICARE covers reconstructive surgery. Learn more at <https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/ReconstructiveSurgery>.

### Comprehensive care programs

Many areas offer comprehensive breast cancer care program, like those accredited by the **American College of Surgeons**, allowing women to receive screenings, surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy if needed, all from the same care team. More than 70% of these accredited programs participate in the **TRICARE West Region provider network**.

## **TRICARE's screening mammography benefit**

TRICARE covers screening mammography annually for all women beginning at age 40. For women with a 15% or higher lifetime risk of breast cancer, coverage begins at age 30. There are no costs or copayments for these preventive services, and you don't need a referral from a primary care manager if the screening is done by a network provider.

Learn more at <https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/Mammograms>.

## **Make breast cancer screening a priority**

Show some love for yourself or for a loved one by making, or encouraging someone to make, this year's appointment for mammography screening. An early diagnosis can give you the great gift of time and well-being to enjoy all the moments and experiences your future has to offer.

