

POSITION PAPER

Screening Mammography

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Definition

Screening mammograms are low-dose breast X-rays used to detect changes and abnormalities in breasts that indicate no signs or symptoms of cancer.

Position Statement

Breast Cancer Network of Strength recommends that women undergo regular mammography, even though scientific data do not uniformly support the idea that screening mammograms save lives.

Mammography is regarded as the “gold standard” for detecting breast cancer at its earliest stages, when the cancer is confined to the breast and most successfully treated. Mammography does have limitations, including missing as much as 25 percent of cancers in women younger than age 40 and/or women with dense breasts. Mammography also can show suspicious findings that are not cancer, but lead to a biopsy.

Network of Strength Recommendations

- Women should discuss the risks and benefits of screening with a healthcare provider.
- Screening should occur every 1 to 2 years for women 40 to 49 years of age and annually for those 50 to 69. For women 70 and older, screening should continue as long as they maintain good health and have no other prohibiting medical conditions.
- Women who are younger than 40 should consider, in consultation with their healthcare provider, whether to have regular screening mammograms if they:
 - have an extensive family history of breast or ovarian cancer;
 - had irradiation at a young age in the area of the breast;
 - have a history of atypical ductal hyperplasia or lobular carcinoma in situ;
 - carry the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation; and/or
 - are planning breast reduction surgery.
- Any abnormality found on a screening mammogram should be discussed with a physician and followed up appropriately.
- Women—and men—of any age who have unusual changes in their breasts (e.g., lump, dimpling, skin irritation, and nipple discharge) should consult a healthcare provider and together consider having a diagnostic mammogram.



The following table presents recommendations of other national organizations.

Organization	Age 40-49	Age 50-69	Age \geq 70
American Cancer Society	Annual	Annual	Annual
American Medical Association	Annual	Annual	Annual
American College of Radiology	Annual	Annual	Annual
U.S. Preventive Services Task Force	1-2 years	1-2 years	1-2 years
National Cancer Institute	1-2 years	1-2 years	1-2 years

Given the lack of clear evidence on the timing of screening mammograms, women should consult with a healthcare provider to determine a schedule best for them.

About Breast Cancer Network of Strength

The mission of Breast Cancer Network of Strength is to ensure, through information, empowerment and peer support, that no one faces breast cancer alone.

For additional information about Network of Strength, visit www.networkofstrength.org.