

Should You Start Breast Cancer Screenings at Age 40 or 45?

Understanding Breast Cancer and Mammograms

Breast cancer is a disease in which cells in the breast grow out of control. Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women.

A breast cancer screening (mammogram) checks for breast cancer. A mammogram is a low-dose digital X-ray of your breast.

During a mammogram, your breast is compressed between two panels for a few seconds so the X-ray can get a clear image of your breast tissue. You will have at least 2 images taken of each breast. The appointment will take about 20 minutes.

Your Screening Schedule

When to start having mammograms to screen for breast cancer is a personal decision. It should be based on:

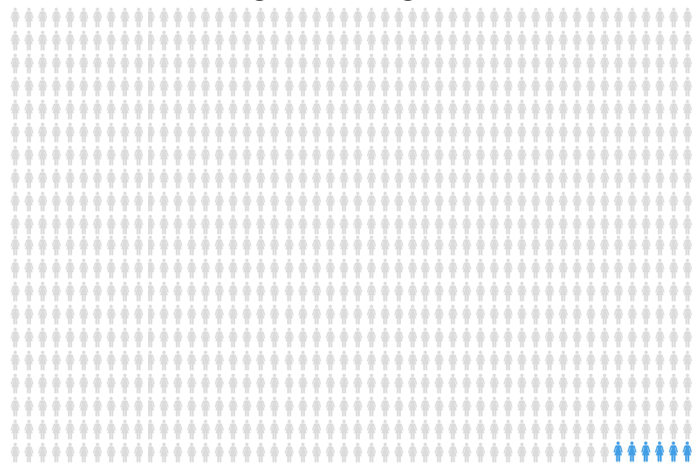
- the benefits and risks of having mammograms
- your risk of developing breast cancer
- your values and preferences.

Allina Health recommends all women begin having mammograms every year at age 45. However, beginning mammograms at age 40 is an option that may be right for you.

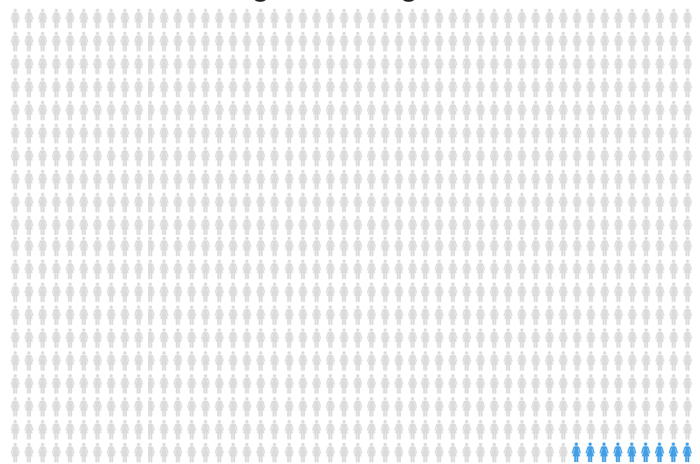
Together, you and your health care provider will decide when mammograms are right for you.

Risk of Developing Breast Cancer

Age 40 Through 44



Age 45 Through 49



- About 6 in 1,000 women from age 40 through 44 will develop breast cancer.
- About 9 in 1,000 women from age 45 through 49 will develop breast cancer.

This means your risk of developing breast cancer is lower when you are age 40 through 44 and higher when you are age 45 through 49.

Benefits and Risks of Mammograms

Benefits

- Mammograms help women find breast cancer in early stages. This may:
 - give you more choices for your treatment
 - improve your chance of survival. A mammogram is the only screening test that has been shown to increase the chance of surviving breast cancer.

Risks

- During and after the mammogram, you may have short-term discomfort, such as sore or tender breasts.
- Mammograms may find something that looks like cancer but is not cancer. One out of 12 women will need a test (an additional mammogram or a procedure) to confirm she does not have cancer. This is called a false-positive result.

Call your insurance provider to learn about possible out-of-pocket costs for this extra testing.

- Mammograms may find breast cancer that will not cause health problems. You may receive breast cancer treatment that is not needed. This is called overdiagnosis.

No single test can tell for sure if breast cancer will or will not cause health problems. As a result, how often overdiagnosis occurs is not known. Research indicates it is rare.

Important

Tell your health care provider if you have changes in your breasts. This includes:

- a lump or thickening in your breast or underarm area
- a dimple in the skin of your breast or a nipple turned inward into your breast
- a change in one of your breast's size or appearance
- nipple discharge (fluid) that is not related to breastfeeding.

Health Insurance

Most insurance companies cover the cost of mammograms.

Your health care provider's recommendation for services does not guarantee coverage by your insurance provider.

Call your insurance provider to see if mammograms are covered under your plan and how much you have to pay yourself. Look for the telephone number on your membership card.

Free and low-cost mammograms are available for women with little or no insurance. Call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 for more information.

Risks for Developing Breast Cancer

Certain risks increase your chance of having breast cancer. There are some risks you can control and others you cannot control. Check the box in the table (at right) for each risk that applies to you.

Talk with your health care provider about your risk level.

Important: If you have a higher than average risk for breast cancer, your health care provider may recommend a different screening schedule than the one listed on page 1.

	Risks for Developing Breast Cancer	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	woman	These are the two greatest risks for getting breast cancer. The majority of all breast cancers occur in women who have no other risks. Your risk of getting breast cancer increases as you get older.
<input type="checkbox"/>	age 40 or older	
<input type="checkbox"/>	history of breast cancer in your family (mother, grandmother, aunt, sister)	This increases your risk of getting breast cancer.
<input type="checkbox"/>	member(s) of your family developed breast cancer before age 40	Tell your health care provider the age that your family member(s) found out he or she had breast cancer.
<input type="checkbox"/>	dense breasts	Your breast density is based on how dark or light your breast tissue is on a mammogram. If you have dense breasts, you may have a slightly higher risk of getting breast cancer.
<input type="checkbox"/>	had radiation therapy to your chest	This increases your risk of getting breast cancer.
<input type="checkbox"/>	being obese	A body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more is linked to an increased risk of breast cancer. Go to cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi to find out your BMI.

Comparing My Options

Check the box next to the items you prefer.

	Important Part of My Decision	Not an Important Part of My Decision	My Preferences
<p>False-positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — It is more common for younger women to have false-positive results. — You may need another mammogram or procedure to confirm you do not have cancer. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> age 40 <input type="checkbox"/> age 45
<p>Overdiagnosis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Starting screening mammograms at age 40 or 45 will not affect the rare overdiagnosis issue. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> age 40 <input type="checkbox"/> age 45
<p>Dense breasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Breast tissue in younger women is more dense. This can make finding breast cancer more difficult. — You may need another mammogram to look more closely at your breast if the mammogram shows an area of concern. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> age 40 <input type="checkbox"/> age 45
<p>Radiation exposure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — There is no scientific evidence of risk of developing breast cancer from a screening mammogram. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> age 40 <input type="checkbox"/> age 45
<p>Early discovery and treatment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The earlier breast cancer is found, survival chances improve. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> age 40 <input type="checkbox"/> age 45
<p>Family history of breast cancer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — If you have a mother, sister or grandmother who had breast cancer, you may want to start screening at 40. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> age 40 <input type="checkbox"/> age 45