

Recommendations for Early Breast Cancer Detection

It is important that breast cancer is found early, even before symptoms have started, so that the chances of diagnosis and treatment can be improved. Screening mammography is a method of early detection. When to start screening mammography has been a somewhat confusing topic. Below we have highlighted some of the recommendations from well-known and respected organizations. However, it's important that a woman discusses these recommendations with her health care provider because every woman is unique with different risk factors, different genetic makeups and different family histories.

Screening Mammography

American College of Radiology

For women with no breast symptoms, the American College of Radiology indicates annual screening mammography is recommended starting at:

- Age 40 for the general population
- Ages 25-30 for BRCA (Breast Cancer 1) carriers and untested relatives of BRCA carriers

Please see the [**American College of Radiology's Appropriateness Criteria®**](#) for more specific information and for recommendations for women with family history of breast cancer, previous radiation therapy or biopsy-proven breast cancers.

Please see [**ACR Recommendations for Women at Average Risk**](#).

Please see [**ACR Recommendations for Women at Higher-Than-Average Risk**](#).

American Cancer Society

For women with no breast symptoms and an average risk of breast cancer, the American Cancer Society has the following recommendations for screening mammography:

- Annually at ages 40-44 if a woman chooses to do so, while considering the risks of screening as well as the potential benefits
- Annually at ages 45-54
- Every 2 years at age 55 and older

Please see the [**American Cancer Society's Recommendations for Early Cancer Detection**](#) for women with higher than average risk for breast cancer for more information.

Breast MRI

Because most of the studies showing the benefits of breast MRI have been based on screening women at high risk due to family history and/or genetic mutations, both the American Cancer Society and the American College of Radiology recommend annual breast MRI in conjunction with annual mammography for women with a lifetime risk of breast cancer of 20-25% or greater using a model based mainly on family history such as Tyrer-Cuzick.