

# PROMOTING BREAST CANCER SCREENING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends that women at average risk for breast cancer undergo annual mammography screening starting at age 45 years, and women ages 40-44 years should also have the opportunity to begin annual screening. At age 55, women may transition to screening every 2 years, or if they prefer, may continue receiving annual mammograms. As long as a woman is in good health and is expected to live 10 or more years, she should continue screening mammograms. Annual screening with MRI is recommended for some women at higher than average risk for breast cancer, starting at age 30 years. [To learn more, access the ACS guidelines for breast cancer screening.](#)

## WHY IS BREAST CANCER SCREENING IMPORTANT?



- Breast cancer is the most common cancer and second-leading cause of cancer death among women in the U.S. It is estimated that there will be 276,480 new cases and 42,170 deaths from breast cancer [in 2020](#).
- Deaths from breast cancer have been declining steadily for over 30 years, largely due to the progress made in screening and treatment.
- Screening with regular mammography saves lives, as cancers detected early tend to have better treatment outcomes.

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT WOMEN AT HIGHER-THAN-AVERAGE RISK FOR BREAST CANCER



- For those at high risk for breast cancer, access to MRI screening should be prioritized and considered essential medical visits.
- High-risk women who had a canceled mammogram and/or MRI due to COVID-19 or are due for screening should schedule now.

## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 ON BREAST CANCER SCREENING?



- [An estimated 87% drop](#) in mammography screening from the end of February to early April 2020.
- Estimated missed or delayed diagnoses of about [36,000 women](#) for the period of March to early June 2020.

# PROMOTING BREAST CANCER SCREENING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



## BREAST CANCER SCREENING DURING COVID-19



- Despite the challenges we face during the pandemic, breast cancer remains a public health priority, and we must provide the public with safe opportunities to resume getting regular mammograms.
- As breast cancer screening centers reopen and follow standard COVID-19 safety measures, getting a mammogram will be safe.
- For average risk women who had canceled mammograms or are delaying appointments, it is important to contact health care providers to reschedule.
- Women who were scheduled for follow-up tests due to an abnormal mammogram should not postpone their appointments and should be given priority in scheduling.
- All women should be aware of changes in the look or feel of their breasts. If they have experienced a change in your breasts during the shutdown, they should call their health care provider to schedule an examination.

## MESSAGING TO PROMOTE BREAST CANCER SCREENING DURING COVID-19



- Women may miss the opportunity to have their breast cancer diagnosed early without deliberate focus to get them back on schedule for regular screening mammograms.
- It should be emphasized that medical facilities are taking appropriate precautions to ensure patient safety, so don't put off getting a mammogram.
- Active reminder systems, including tracking and follow up of women who had canceled appointments in the early months of the pandemic, should be implemented.
- If patients have [signs or symptoms](#) of breast cancer, they should contact their health care provider, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. If they don't have a doctor, they can [call the ACS cancer help-line](#) for assistance finding a provider in your area.
- Screening disparities are already evident and, without deliberate focus, are likely to increase as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information and resources, visit [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org)