

Shared Decision Making for Early Breast Cancer Diagnosis

There has been recent discussion about when women should have mammography screening. Many organizations have suggested different ages to begin screening and different lengths of time between screenings.

It is important to realize that research still supports mammography as the best tool for early detection and that screening each year for women age 40 and over continues to save lives. In addition, cancers found through screening are often easier to treat and lead to better outcomes.

Mammography is not a perfect tool, but technology continues to improve. While there are many benefits of mammography, there are also risks women should be aware of when considering screening:

- with each mammogram there is about a 1 in 10 chance you will be called back in for a second mammogram and/or ultrasound to get better views of a specific area
- this may lead to a biopsy (30-40% will result in a cancer diagnosis)
- you may experience anxiety from additional testing and there may be brief pain or discomfort
- a small number of cancers found through screening may have never needed treatment in a woman's lifetime; this is sometimes called "over diagnosis"

Screening should continue until you and your doctor determine the risks outweigh the benefits. This includes looking at overall health and age expectancy, particularly after age 75.

Please note women at high risk for breast cancer may benefit from additional screening, such as MRI. Most breast cancers are found in women with no known risk factors.

Talk with your doctor to find out when screening is right for you.

Approved by the Salem Cancer Institute Breast Committee. June 2016.