

Johannesburg

[Home](#) [Health](#) [Cancer](#)

Why 40 is not too young for a mammogram

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According to research, mammography for women in their 40s diagnosed earlier stages of breast cancer.



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In recent years there have been contradictory guidelines related to the benefit of annual mammograms for women in their 40s.

However, a new study published in the *American Journal of Roentgenology*, showed that women between ages 40 and 49 who underwent routine screening mammography were diagnosed at earlier stages with smaller tumours and were less likely to require chemotherapy.

"Our findings clearly underscore the impact of neglecting to screen women with mammography for women in their 40s," says the study's first author Donna Plecha, MD, Director of Breast Imaging at UH Case Medical Center Seidman Cancer Center and Assistant Professor at Case Western Reserve School of Medicine. "Foregoing mammography for women in this age group leads to diagnoses of later stage breast cancers. We continue to support screening mammography in women between the ages of 40 and 49 years."

Review of 230 cases of breast cancer

Researchers from University Hospitals (UH) Case Medical Center and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine conducted a retrospective chart review of 230 primary breast cancers.

They found that patients undergoing screening mammography had significant differences with respect to treatment recommendations, stage at diagnosis and identification of high-risk lesions than symptomatic women needing diagnostic evaluation.

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Detection of earlier stages of breast cancer

The researchers determined that patients in the screened group were diagnosed at earlier stages with smaller tumours and less likely to require chemotherapy and its associated morbidities. They also found that screening allows detection of high-risk lesions, which may prompt chemoprevention and lower subsequent breast cancer risk.

Early detection survival rate is 97 percent

Breast cancer is a significant health problem and the stage at which the cancer is discovered influences a woman's chance of survival. An annual mammography after the age of 40 enables physicians to identify the smallest abnormalities. In fact, when breast cancer is detected early and confined to the breast, the five-year survival rate is 97 percent.

"Annual screening mammograms starting at the age of 40 saves lives," says Dr. Plecha. "Breast cancers caught in the initial stages by mammography are more likely to be cured and are less likely to require chemotherapy or as extensive surgery."

Story Source: University Hospitals Case Medical Center via [ScienceDaily](#)

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