



**Kentucky Public Health**

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## Screening Offers the Best Protection for Kentucky Women

*52 Weeks of Public Health Spotlight: Breast Cancer Awareness Month*



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**FRANKFORT, Ky. (October 4, 2017)** – As part of the 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) is raising awareness about breast cancer, the second leading cause of cancer deaths among Kentucky women.

Today, it is estimated that 1 in 8 women are at risk for developing breast cancer during their lifetime. National studies suggest a higher risk for breast cancer mortality in women with lower household incomes which contributes to less access to healthcare services for screening, diagnosis, and treatment, decreased outreach encounters, and late detection of the disease. The rate of new breast cancer rates in Kentucky women has increased since 2010, while the nation incidence rate has remained stable.

Early detection, through breast cancer screening, is the best protection. Screening will not prevent breast cancer, but when the disease is caught early both treatment options and the chance of a cure are much greater. Breast cancer screening is done through clinical breast exams and

mammography. However, every woman should conduct self-examinations monthly to identify any changes that might need to be checked out by a healthcare provider.

In the early stages of breast cancer, there may not be any symptoms. An abnormal mammogram is often times the only way to detect the disease. As the disease develops, warning signs may appear and include the following:

- A new lump, thickening, or swelling in the breast or armpit;
- Irritation/inflammation or dimpling/orange peel appearance of the skin of the breast;
- Nipple changes- redness, flaking, itching, crusting, discharge (including blood), pulling inward;
- Changes in size/shape/color of the breast; and
- Breast pain, not attributed to monthly menstrual cycle.

Since 1991, the [Kentucky Women's Cancer Screening Program \(KWCSPP\)](#) has performed over 318,228 screening mammograms identifying at least 2,418 invasive breast cancers through local health departments in Kentucky. The Women's Cancer Screening Program provides breast and cervical screening as well as follow-up services, education, outreach, quality assurance and surveillance services. Since 2002, the KWCSPP referred more than 5,385 patients to the [Kentucky Department for Medicaid Services Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Program](#) for cancer treatment services.

Routine screening mammograms can begin at age 40, but women with certain risk factors may need to have one earlier. Women should talk to their doctor about when they should begin to get mammograms. As a woman gets older her risk of getting breast cancer increases. Other risk factors contributing to breast cancer in women include:

- Having an immediate family member who has been diagnosed with breast cancer prior to menopause;
- Personal history of breast problems;
- Early menarche (before age 12) and/or late menopause (after age 52);
- No pregnancies or first pregnancy after age 30;
- Long-term hormone replacement or oral contraceptive use;
- Radiation treatments to the chest; and
- Being overweight.

The Kentucky Department for Public Health encourages all Kentucky women over the age of 40 and those who have a history of breast cancer in their family to visit their doctor or [local health department](#) to make October your month to get screened for breast cancer.

Interested in learning more about healthy Kentucky lifestyle? Through our 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, the Kentucky Department for Public Health will spotlight public health issues as well as highlight services and resources available to Kentuckians statewide. Follow us on [Facebook](#) for your weekly tip.