

how to encourage your patients to have mammograms



when your patient is reluctant to have a mammogram

Physician recommendation carries a tremendous amount of weight. It is one of the most important factors influencing a woman to have a screening test.

why do some women fail to have mammograms?

Quite often there is a barrier to getting a mammogram. Find out what the barrier is for each individual.

denial

Not at Risk, Not Necessary for Me

The biggest risk factor is simply being a woman. Most women who develop breast cancer do not have a family history or other risk factors. The older a woman is, the greater her chance of developing breast cancer. A woman's chance of getting breast cancer is:

from age 30 to age 40	1 out of 252
from age 40 to age 50	1 out of 68
from age 50 to age 60	1 out of 35
from age 60 to age 70	1 out of 27
Ever	1 out of 8*

fear

Fear of Finding Cancer

Early detection makes a difference. The earlier cancer is detected, the greater the chances of successful treatment. A mammogram can detect a lump up to two years before it can be felt during a breast self-exam.

With earlier detection, there may be more treatment options. In some cases, finding a breast tumor early may mean that a woman can choose surgery that saves her breast, or she may not have to undergo chemotherapy.

Fear of Radiation

Experts agree that the amount of radiation exposure is minimal and about the same as receiving a dental x-ray.

Fear of Pain

It may be a little uncomfortable, but most women say there is no pain, and compression lasts only a few seconds.

time

Too Busy

Acknowledge that life today is busy and has many demands. Many women care for others - encourage her to make time to care for herself! Many mammogram facilities are open into the evenings and weekends. It may be convenient for your patient to make appointment first thing in the morning on a workday, or during her lunch hour. You can offer to schedule the mammogram while your patient is still in your office, and have your staff write the location and date on an appointment card.

when is the best time to discuss?

Anytime. It's not necessary to wait for a comprehensive physical exam. If your patient is in for a "sick" visit, it may be an appropriate time to remind her that she is due for a mammogram.

what about my patients who don't come into the office?

You can send a postcard or letter, or call the patient. If you need patient addresses or phone numbers, Univera can provide you with this information.

how do I keep track of who needs mammograms?

Providers with the highest mammography compliance rates have tracking systems. Or, you may want to maintain flow sheets in the front section of the medical record indicating the dates of preventive screening tests.

* Source: National Cancer Institute Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program, 1997-1999.

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