



# **Early Awareness, Lifelong Wellness: Breast Health**

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- Federal guidance recommends women at 40 start to get mammograms
- Younger women should pay attention to signs and symptoms and speak to their doctor if concerns arise
- Knowing family history is important in assessing breast health treatment plans

In May 2023, federal officials drafted a groundbreaking recommendation for women to get the common breast screening known as a mammogram. This new guidance given by

the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) lowered the age from 50 to 40.

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS). It makes up for roughly 30% of new female cancers every year.

OSF HealthCare advanced practice registered nurse Banesa Chavez says early intervention is key to preventing breast cancer deaths.

“The benefit of completing your screenings is being able to find it earlier and get it treated,” Chavez says. “The outcomes are a lot better when the cancer is found in the early stages.”

Alongside seeing a breast health specialist, Chavez says there are ways to perform self-checks for breast cancer at home. She adds it’s vital to be vigilant in detecting any signs or symptoms and reach out to your medical provider if you find something concerning.

“If you experience any pain, any discharge,” Chavez says. “Women should be doing breast self-exams monthly.”

If you’re unsure how to perform breast self-exams, you can read [Breast self-checks 101 on the OSF Newsroom](#).

Chavez says the new breast screening recommendations should be reason for younger women to pay attention to any bumps or lumps they see or feel on their breasts.

“Just because you’re not in your 40s or 50s, that doesn’t mean you should ignore any abnormalities or breast changes,” Chavez says. “Come and see us. There are other things we can do, other than mammograms, to detect what’s going on with your breast changes. Especially if there is a strong family history of breast cancer, it’s important not to ignore your symptoms.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports about 240,000 cases of breast cancer are diagnosed in women and about 2,100 in men each year. About 42,000 women and 500 men in the U.S. die from the disease every year.

[The OSF HealthCare recommendations for mammograms can be found here.](#)