



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

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Idaho's Breast Cancer Screening Rate Lowest in the US

More than a third of Idaho women over 40 did not receive important breast cancer screening in the last two years, making Idaho last out of 50 states and the District of Columbia in cancer screening mammogram rates.

The Cancer Data Registry of Idaho estimates there are over 122,000 Idaho women over the age of 40 who have not had a mammogram in the previous two years. "Mammography screening is an important tool in making early diagnosis of breast cancer and saving lives," says Patti Moran, who heads up the cancer program at the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. "Idaho has consistently ranked at or near the bottom for breast cancer screening. We want Idaho women to take note, and if they are 40 or older and haven't had a mammogram this year, to make an appointment today to get screened. It could save their life."

The earlier a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer, the better her chances of survival. For women diagnosed at an early stage, when the cancer is confined to her breast tissue, about 95% will survive five years or longer. But for women diagnosed at a later stage, when the cancer has begun to spread, one of every four women will die within five years.

The American Cancer Society recommends yearly mammograms for women beginning at age 40. In the last two years, only 63.8% of Idaho women aged 40 or older reported getting screened for breast cancer. The alarming news is that Idaho's screening rates have been at or near the bottom over

the last decade, leaving Idaho far behind states with the highest screening rates. In 2010, Massachusetts ranked best among states in breast cancer screening, at 83.6%. The national average is 76%.

Since 2008, cancer has been the leading cause of death among women in Idaho. Breast cancer is the second leading cancer death among women, behind lung cancer. In 2009 alone, there were over 1,100 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed among women in Idaho and 185 deaths from breast cancer. It is estimated that one in eight women will develop breast cancer during their lives.

"While we can't be sure why Idaho's rates remain consistently low, we do know that lacking health insurance that helps covers the cost of the screening may be a factor," says Moran. She notes that with the Affordable Care Act, many health insurance plans now offer mammography screening without a copay. Moran encourages women who have insurance, but still feel they cannot afford the screening, to check with their health insurer to determine current costs.

Statistics also show low-income women are less likely to be screened. Of the Idaho women who have not been screened during the last two years, almost 70% live in households with incomes of less than \$50,000. There are some resources available for women who experience barriers to getting screened:

- The federally funded Idaho Women's Health Check offers free screening to a small number of women who qualify. More information about the program can be found here (link to the page).
- Operation Pink B.A.G., a collaborative project aimed at increasing Idaho's screening mammography rates, also has additional information about resources to help women get screened.
- Women can also call the 211 Idaho CareLine to find out about screening in their area.

"The bottom line is that we need to encourage all Idaho women who are 40 or older to get regular screening mammograms," says Moran. "One out of eight women will get breast cancer during their lives, so early detection is their best protection."

Informational links:

- Operation Pink Bag— www.operationpinkbag.org
- American Cancer Society— www.cancer.org

- Susan G. Komen for the Cure— ww5.komen.org
- Cancer Data Registry of Idaho—www.idcancer.org
- Comprehensive Cancer Alliance for Idaho—www.ccaidaho.org
- Idaho Comprehensive Cancer Control Program—
www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov