



Everyday Health Column

“Breast Cancer Awareness: Early Detection Saves Lives!”



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October is breast cancer awareness month. Breast cancer is the leading cause of women’s mortality. The incidence of breast cancer is about 1 in 8 women. Our mothers, sisters, girlfriends, wives, and daughters are all at risk and it is likely we personally know someone who has had the diagnosis of breast cancer. It is therefore very important to become aware about what is recommended for the detection and treatment of breast cancer.

Currently mammography in some form is the most efficient and cost effective test available for the detection of breast cancer. The dose of radiation received from the diagnostic test is measured in milliSivert (mSv). The dose from a four view mammogram is about 0.4 mSv. This would be equivalent to about 7 weeks from natural background radiation found in nature. The point being that the dose of radiation is small. 3D mammography will have a slightly higher amount of radiation 0.5-1.0 mSv. Compare this to the potential risk of missing an early breast cancer in 1 out of 8 women. It is important to also remember that no diagnostic test is perfect in detection. The mammogram is accurate in finding breast cancers to around the 87% range and therefore should not be thought of as definitive. However even with this limitation, the mammogram is the gold standard for breast cancer screening.

The mammogram exam itself is not typically painful and can be performed safely and easily. The costs associated with the mammogram are often covered by insurance or are offered at affordable prices during the year at your local hospital. At Cuero Regional Hospital, digital screening mammograms and readings are only \$65 for the month of October. To schedule, call 361-275-0170.

Current recommendations about screening have varied however guidelines by the American Cancer Society are as follows: “The ACS recommends that women with an average risk of breast cancer should undergo regular screening mammography starting at age 45 years (strong recommendation). Women age 45-54 years should be screened annually (qualified recommendation).

Women 55 years and older should transition to biennial screening or have the opportunity to continue screening annually (qualified recommendation). Women should have the opportunity to being annual screening between the ages of 40 and 44 years (qualified recommendation). Women should continue screening mammography as long as their overall health is good and they have a life expectancy of 10 years or longer (qualified recommendation). The ACS does not recommend clinical breast examination for breast cancer screening among average-risk women at any age (qualified recommendation).”

For those patients with a family history of breast cancer in the family or inherited genetic disorder such as BRCA1, BRCA2, screening should be initiated earlier than age 40.

Not it is also true men can acquire breast cancer. Breast cancer in men is not screened for as the incidence of breast cancer in men is very low – less than 1% of all breast cancer in men and women. Men need to be aware of any nipple changes or any lumps or bumps in the breast area and seek professional medical advice.

I highly recommend screening as the best way to find and treat breast cancer early. To learn more on this topic and other health education information, please visit cuerohospital.org and follow Cuero Regional Hospital on Facebook for health news updates.