

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network has published new patient-friendly breast cancer screening guidelines

[Hannah Murphy](#) | July 27, 2022 | [Screening](#)



New breast cancer screening guidelines published by the [National Comprehensive Cancer Network](#) put emphasis on the age at which average women should begin annual screening.

NCCN maintains that women at average risk (no known genetic risk of family history) should begin undergoing annual mammograms at the age of 40, and that all women should start breast cancer risk assessments through their primary healthcare provider starting at age 25 and continuing every 1 to 3 years thereafter. These assessments gauge a woman's risk of developing cancer during her lifetime and include a rundown of family history, blood work, discussing any changes pertaining to the breasts as well as a breast exam.

“There are many, often conflicting, recommendations surrounding breast cancer screening, which causes a lot of confusion and apprehension,” Therese Bevers, MD, who is a Professor of Clinical Cancer Prevention at

the [University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center](#) and Chair with the NCCN Guidelines Panel for Breast Cancer Screening and Diagnosis, said in a [release](#). “These are the latest, evidence-based guidelines from experts in the field of breast cancer screening and diagnosis from more than two dozen leading cancer centers in the United States.”

Other key NCCN recommendations include undergoing [3D mammography](#) when possible, continuing annual screenings during pregnancy with the protection of a lead shield and including [breast MRI](#) exams in clinical protocols for women who are at an increased risk of developing cancer.

“Annual mammography screening beginning at age 40 is associated with the highest mortality reduction for average risk women,” said Mark Helvie, MD, who is a member of the NCCN Guidelines Panel for Breast Cancer Screening and Diagnosis. “Having a mammogram at infrequent or irregular intervals limits its effectiveness. For women at increased risk, the NCCN Guidelines recommend starting screening earlier and often include breast MRI in addition to mammography.”

These most recent recommendations are the latest addition to the NCCN’s library of cancer screening guidelines. They are written in easy-to-understand, patient-friendly language and offer women a plethora of individualized information pertaining to their risks and screening recommendations.

They are available for free [here](#).