

Many breast cancer survivors not getting needed mammograms

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(HealthDay)—After surviving a diagnosis of breast cancer, women still

need regular screening. But many of them, especially black women, aren't getting the mammograms they need, a new study finds.

It's essential to screen for a return of cancer so it can be treated before symptoms appear, the researchers explained.

"The use of regular mammograms to detect a return of [breast cancer](#) before any symptoms appear is associated with better overall survival," said lead researcher Dr. Kathryn Ruddy, director of cancer survivorship at the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center in Rochester, Minn.

"Therefore, clinicians need to make sure that their patients are fully aware of the role these annual mammograms play in screening for new breast cancers as well as for local recurrences," she added. "Creating and implementing survivorship care plans with clear follow-up instructions may help ensure that more survivors adhere to recommended screening schedules."

For the study, Ruddy and her colleagues followed more than 27,000 women for several years after [breast cancer surgery](#). Women who had both breasts removed were excluded, because mammograms are no longer needed for them.

Of the nearly 4,900 women remaining in the study after five years, the researchers tracked how well they kept up with their annual [breast cancer screening](#).

One year after surgery, 13 percent of the women had not had a mammogram. Five years later, the number of women who hadn't had a mammogram in the past year rose to 19 percent, the researchers found.

Over five years, only 50 percent of the women had at least one mammogram each year, Ruddy's team found.

The researchers also found that [black women](#) were less likely than white women to get yearly [mammograms](#). Lack of screening may contribute to higher death rates among black women, because recurrence of breast cancer is a major cause for poor outcomes in black [women](#), the researchers said.

The findings were published May 24 in the *Journal of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network*.

"This lack of imaging follow-up represents a missed opportunity for identifying recurrent or new breast cancers among a high-risk patient subgroup," said Dr. Benjamin Anderson in a journal news release. He is a professor of surgery and global health medicine at the University of Washington and vice chair of the network's Guidelines Panel for Breast Cancer.

"Of equal importance, this finding illustrates that our health care system can fail to track sizable groups of [cancer](#) patients after completion of treatment," Anderson said.

More information: For more on breast cancer, visit the [American Cancer Society](#).

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