

Many factors stop U.S. women from getting mammograms

April 9 2024, by Dennis Thompson



Health care cost and access are not the only barriers women face in getting lifesaving mammograms, a new government report finds.

Food insecurity, lack of transportation, less hours at work and feelings of isolation also can keep women from getting screened for breast cancer, researchers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention discovered.

"We have to address these health-related social needs to help women get the mammograms they need," said CDC Chief Medical Officer Dr. Debra Houry.

Breast cancer causes more than 40,000 deaths in women each year in the United States, the CDC said. Mammogram screening has been shown to cut down on those deaths.

"Identifying these challenges and coordinating efforts between health care, social services, [community organizations](#) and public health to help address these needs could improve efforts to increase breast cancer screening and ultimately save these tragic losses to families," Houry added in a CDC news release.

For the study, researchers analyzed data from the 2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. They concluded that the more health-related social needs a woman has, the less likely she is to get a mammogram.

The cost of health care was the greatest challenge to women who hadn't gotten a mammogram in the past two years, but other barriers also played a role. Lack of insurance, [low income](#) and no regular source of health care also were factors impeding women's use of mammography.

"If we are to achieve higher [breast cancer screening](#) for all women, we have to look at all the possible challenges women face in getting mammograms," said Dr. Lisa Richardson, director of the CDC's Division of Cancer Prevention and Control. "Health care providers can now assess whether women have health-related social needs and help

women get the services they need. Every woman should be able to get screened for [breast cancer](#) without barriers."

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force currently recommends that women ages 50 to 74 get a screening mammogram every two years, and that women 40 to 49 talk to their doctor about when to start and how often to get a mammogram.

The new report was published April 9 in the CDC's *Vital Signs*.

More information: The American Cancer Society has more on [mammograms](#).

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