

Why Start Screening at Age 40?

1. Annual screening mammography starting at age 40 results in the greatest mortality reduction, the most lives saved and the most life years gained (LYG). This is why the ACR/SBI recommends regular mammography in women 40-and-older (including 40-49)
2. Breast cancer incidence increases substantially around age 40. The incidence rate for ages 40-44 is twice that for ages 35-39 (122.5 vs 59.5 per 100,000 women). For ages 45-49 it is 188.6 per 100,000 women; it continues to increase until age 80.
3. One in six breast cancers occur in women aged 40-49.
4. Forty percent of all the years of life saved by mammography are among women in their 40s.
5. The years of life lost to breast cancer are highest for women in their 40's.
6. The largest ([Hellquist et al](#)) and longest running ([Tabar et al](#)) breast cancer screening trials in history have reconfirmed that regular mammography screening cuts breast cancer deaths by roughly a third in all women ages 40 and over (including women ages 40-49).
7. The recent Pan-Canadian Mammography Study ([Coldman et al](#)) involved over 2.7 million women screened in Canada and showed an average mortality reduction of 40%, which was the same for women 40-49 as for older age groups.
8. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) acknowledges an increase in total number of lives saved and life-years gained in women who start mammography screening in their 40's.
9. Analysis by [Hendrick and Helvie](#) published in the American Journal of Roentgenology shows that at current mammography screening rates, annual screening starting at age 40 saves approximately 6,500 more women's lives each year in the U.S. than the USPSTF recommendation of screening every other year starting at age 50.
10. Annual screening results in more lives saved from breast cancer than biennial screening. USPSTF scientific review now shows annual screening beginning at age 40 provides the most lives saved.
11. A study ([Otto et al](#)) published in Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention shows mammography screening cuts the risk of dying from breast cancer nearly in half.
12. A recent [study published in Cancer](#) showed that more than 70 percent of the women who died from breast cancer in their 40s at major Harvard teaching hospitals were among the 20 percent of women who were not being screened. Because medical science cannot determine which cancers will advance to kill a woman and which will not, all women 40 and older should be screened annually.