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In the Loop

Health Panel Drops Breast Cancer Screening Age to 40

On April 30, 2024, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) [recommended](#) that women get a mammogram every other year starting at age 40 and continuing until they are 74. Nearly one year after this screening guidance was drafted in May 2023, the health panel's recommendations have been finalized without major changes.

This latest advice from the USPSTF, which comprises a group of independent disease prevention and medical experts, is somewhat of a reversal. In 2009, the health panel raised the age for starting routine mammograms from 40 to 50. At that time, health experts were concerned that earlier screening would do more harm than good. Yet new research reveals that breast cancer rates among women in their 40s are on the rise, supporting the expanded recommendation.

The National Cancer Institute reported that the rate of breast cancer among women ages 40-49 increased by an average of 2% each year from 2015-19.

About Breast Cancer

The American Cancer Society reports that breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among women. About 42,000 women and 500 men die from the disease each year. However, breast cancer is treatable when caught early, and mammograms—X-ray images of breasts—are a reliable screening test. The latest medical evidence

suggests that every other year, the screening of breast tissue provides a "moderate net benefit" for women up to age 74 and can help save lives.

Several risk factors increase an individual's chances of getting breast cancer. Some risk factors can't be changed—such as family history, age and gender—whereas others, like smoking and drinking alcohol, can be avoided. To lower the risk of developing breast cancer, doctors recommend following a healthy lifestyle and getting regular screenings. Although breast cancer may not cause any symptoms in its early stages and tumors may be too small to be felt in many cases, abnormalities can still be found with a mammogram.

What Does This Mean?

Health experts stress that if all women follow the new recommendation of starting routine mammograms at the age of 40, it could save about 8,000 American lives each year. The guidance applies to all women who are asymptomatic and at average risk for breast cancer, including those with dense breast tissue and a family history of breast cancer.

Contact your doctor if you have questions about mammograms or your health history.



What You Should Know About Ozempic

Ozempic is an injectable prescription medication approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for treating Type 2 diabetes in adults. Recently, the drug has gained national attention from celebrities for its weight loss effects.

Keep in mind that taking Ozempic to lose weight is considered off-label use, which the drug's manufacturer does not promote, suggest or encourage.

Ozempic is medically approved to improve blood sugar in individuals with Type 2 diabetes. It can also help people with Type 2 diabetes and known heart disease reduce their risk for cardiovascular events, such as stroke or heart attack.

Ozempic for Weight Loss

Researchers have found that people who take Ozempic may lose modest amounts of weight while on the medication. The FDA-approved active ingredient in Ozempic, semaglutide, can impact weight in the following ways:

- It slows the rate at which an individual's stomach empties, prolonging feelings of fullness and satiety.
- It affects the hunger centers in the brain, reducing or curbing appetite, hunger and cravings.

The FDA approves semaglutide at higher doses for treating individuals living with obesity and other weight-related medical problems under the brand name Wegovy. However, individuals should only use Wegovy as a weight-loss tool under medical supervision and when dealing with "severe" obesity. Although Ozempic and Wegovy have the same active ingredient, they have different brand names and dosage schedules.

Consult your primary care physician if you have questions or concerns about Ozempic.