

# women

**EXTRA IMPORTANT** a message for men in our community

Did you know ?

Breast cancer is the number one cancer among California women of all race/ethnic groups except Laotian women, for whom cervical cancer is the most common. (American Cancer Society, 2001)

Survival rates are high for Asian and Pacific Islander women diagnosed with early stage breast or cervical cancer, when the cancer is small and has not spread.

Strategies to reduce women's risk of cancer include regular cancer screenings, physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, and limiting alcohol intake. To show support for the women in your life, you can also engage in these healthy behaviors together. You may both feel better!

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# A Healthy Tomorrow Starts Today



## Important Health Exams for Women in our Community

Our mothers, wives, sisters, aunts, nieces, and daughters have important health needs. Unfortunately, many women are at risk for cancer.

As the men in their lives it is important to understand, support, and encourage them to seek appropriate health care.

The following are four important medical examinations that will help the women in your community live healthier lives. These are important medical procedures that will help detect cancer early, when it's easier to treat and will help our women live healthier and longer.

### Breast Self Examination (BSE)

During the examination, the woman will feel her breasts, examining their shape and texture and identifying any lumps or any other change.

If any changes are found, the woman should see a health professional immediately.

It is recommended that women over age 20 examine their breasts once a month. For women who still getting their menstrual periods, the best time is 7 to 10 days after the start of the menstruation period, when the breasts are least tender.

### Clinical Breast Examination (CBE)

A CBE is a physical examination of the breast by a health professional, such as a nurse or doctor.

During the exam, the doctor or nurse gently feels the breasts, examining the shape and texture of the breasts and identifying any lumps.

Women between the ages of 20 and 39 should get a CBE every 3 years. It is recommended that women 40 years of age and over receive yearly exams.

### Mammogram

Mammograms are low dose x-ray pictures of the breast that can detect changes that cannot be felt by touch. It can detect breast cancer in its earliest stages.

A mammogram does not cause cancer. The procedure generally lasts less than 30 minutes and can be done in a doctor's office, a radiology laboratory, or in a hospital.

Women ages 40 to 44 should have the choice to start annual mammograms if they wish to do so. Women ages 45 to 54 should get mammograms every year. Women 55 and older should switch to getting mammograms every 2 years, or they can continue yearly screening.

Some women – because of their family history, a genetic tendency, or certain other factors – should be screened with MRIs along with mammograms. (The number of women who fall into this category is very small.) Talk with a health care provider about your risk for breast cancer and the best screening plan for you.

However, women of any age with a lump or other abnormal breast changes should see a doctor immediately.

## Pap Smear and Pelvic Examination

During a pelvic exam, the nurse or doctor will look at a woman's vaginal area for any signs of infection or other problems.

The exam will include conducting a Pap Smear which can detect both cancer and pre-cancerous lesions in the cervix. Sometimes, this test may be uncomfortable, and a little spotting of blood after the test is normal.

During the test, the nurse or doctor will wipe a swab on the cervix in the vagina to gather cells. The cells will be checked for cancer or other problems.

After a Pap Smear, the nurse or doctor will check a woman's vaginal area by feeling for any lumps or tenderness.

Women should start having pap smears done at age 21. For women ages 21 to 65, pap smears should be done every 3 years.

Women ages 30 to 65 should have a pap smear done with an HPV test every 5 years but it is okay to have a pap smear alone every 3 years.

Women over age 65 who have had regular pap smears in the past 10 years with normal results should no longer be tested for cervical cancer.

Some women – because of their health history (HIV infection, organ transplant, etc.) – may need a different screening schedule for cervical cancer. Talk to a health care provider about your history.