



## To Screen or Not to Screen?

[May 13-19](#) is National Women's Health Week, a reminder for women who are in their twenties to their nineties that there are steps they can take to lead a healthier life. At all stages of life, preventive measures such as certain screening tests and immunizations may be appropriate, and should be discussed with one's doctor.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women regardless of race or ethnicity, and it is the second leading cause of cancer death in American women. In recent years there has been disagreement among doctors regarding the screening recommendations made in 2016 by the [U.S. Preventive Task Force](#), which stated that science shows mammography is most beneficial for women ages 50 - 74, to be done every two years. The Task Force added that screening before age 50 should be a decision made by a woman and her doctor, recognizing the potential benefits and potential risks.

However, the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists \(ACOG\)](#) recommended in 2017 that women of average risk start screening every one or two years starting in their 40's. These differences in guidelines underscore the need for women to discuss screening with their doctors in order to make an informed decision about when to start screening, the frequency, and when to end screening.



## Reducing the Risk of Breast Cancer

While every woman can be at risk for breast cancer, there are ways to lower the risk through lifestyle choices, including the following:

- **Maintain a normal weight:** Women who are obese are at higher risk of breast cancer than those of normal weight.
- **Exercise:** Regular exercise of at least 1.5 hours per week can reduce the risk of breast cancer and other types of cancers.
- **Don't smoke and avoid second-hand smoke.**
- **Limit alcohol intake** to no more than one drink per day.
- **Sit less, stand more.** Too much sitting increases the risk for breast cancer and other diseases.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in primary care, addiction recovery services, or mental health care for children or adults, contact InterCommunity. To receive services at any of our Hartford or East Hartford locations, please call 860-569-5900.



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