



October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. According to the American Cancer Society, 114/100,000 women in the state of Tennessee are diagnosed with breast cancer each year. Here is what you need to know about screening and early detection of breast cancer:

Breast cancer screening methods

Mammogram — A mammogram is an X-ray picture of the breast. It is done with a special X-ray machine designed for this purpose. The picture is stored on film (standard) or into a computer (digital). A mammogram can find many cancers before they can be felt.

Clinical breast exam — A breast exam by a health care provider should be part of your regular medical checkup. If it is not, ask for it. A clinical breast exam includes a visual examination and carefully feeling the entire breast and underarm area. If you are 40 or older, schedule your mammogram close to the time of your clinical breast exam.

Breast self-exam (BSE) — Is a tool that may help you learn what is normal for you. BSE includes looking at and feeling your breasts. Many women have a pattern of lumpiness in their breasts, which is normal. But if you feel any change or a new lump in your breasts or underarms, ask your doctor to examine the area.

Now is the best time

Believe it or not, the best time to check for breast cancer is when your breasts feel fine. If you find cancer early, there are more treatment options and a much better chance for survival. Mammography is the best screening method used today to find breast cancer early. However, it is not perfect. But, when mammography is combined with clinical breast exam your chances for finding cancer are even greater. Remember, even if you feel healthy now, just being a woman and getting older puts you at risk for breast cancer. Getting checked regularly can put your mind at ease. And finding cancer early may save your life.

Find your age on the chart below to see which screening methods you should use and how often. Women under age 40 with either a family history of breast cancer or other concerns about their personal risk should talk with their health care provider about when to start getting mammograms or other tests, such as breast MRI, and how often to have them.

AGE 20-39	Frequency	AGE 40 or OLDER	Frequency
Clinical Breast Exam	Once every 3 years	Mammogram	Once a year
Breast Self Exam	Once a month	Clinical Breast Exam	Once a year
Women at higher risk may need to be screened earlier and more frequently.		Breast Self Exam	Once a month