

Early Detection and Screening Can Save Lives & Money fightcancer.org

Early detection of breast and cervical cancer through screening can improve survival and reduce mortality by finding cancer at an early stage when treatment is more effective and less expensive. However, research has shown there are many barriers to cancer screening for people with limited income, including access to providers and facilities, costs of screening and care, lack of knowledge and understanding about the role of screening, as well as barriers like time off work and access to childcare. Unfortunately, people who are uninsured and underinsured have lower breast and cervical cancer screening rates, resulting in a greater risk of being diagnosed at a later, more advanced stage of disease.ⁱ

To address these barriers and increase screening rates, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) [National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program \(NBCCEDP\)](#) provides breast and cervical cancer screenings, diagnostic tests, and treatment referral services to U.S. communities that are limited-income, underserved, underinsured, or uninsured. In addition to direct support, the NBCCEDP relies on partnerships to address many of the structural and economic barriers limited-income people face when it comes to getting screened.ⁱⁱ

The Benefits of Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening

The NBCCEDP is highly effective at detecting and treating breast and cervical cancer in people who may otherwise not be screened. By detecting cancer sooner, breast and cervical cancer screening benefits include:

- ❖ **Reducing health care spending:** When compared to women not getting screened, the early detection of breast cancer by mammography leads to a greater range of less-extensive and less-invasive treatment options, that often cost less money than treatment needed at later stages.ⁱⁱⁱ Screening for cervical cancer similarly identifies cancer at earlier, less expensive stages to treat, with the additional benefit of identifying and removing precancerous abnormalities preventing cancer altogether.^{iii,viii}
- ❖ **Decreasing late-stage cancer diagnosis.** Breast cancer screening has resulted in a 29% reduction in late-stage breast cancer diagnosis.^{iv} Increasing access to cervical cancer screening and timely follow-up for abnormal results can reduce the number of later stage cervical cancer diagnoses.^v
- ❖ **Reducing cancer deaths:** Almost 100 percent of all individuals diagnosed with breast cancer at a local (early) stage are still alive five years later.^{vi} Mammography reduces the risk of dying from breast cancer by about 20 to 40 percent.ⁱⁱⁱ Cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates have declined by more than 50% over the past three decades because of access to screening, and more recently, HPV vaccination.

ACS CAN Supports the Reauthorization of this Lifesaving Program

To save lives and reduce health care spending, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) supports increased funding and passage of the *Screening for Communities to Receive Early and Equitable Needed Services (SCREENS) for Cancer Act* (H.R. 3916 / S. 1840). The *SCREENS for Cancer Act* would reauthorize the NBCCEDP to allow for greater flexibility in providing access to lifesaving screening, diagnostic, and treatment services and continue its innovative work aimed to reduce disparities and advance health equity in breast and cervical cancer.

ⁱ American Cancer Society. Cancer Prevention & Early Detection Facts & Figures 2021-2022. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2021.

ⁱⁱ Lee NC, Wong FL, Jamison PM, Jones SF, Galaska L, Brady KT, Wethers B, Stokes-Townsend GA. Implementation of the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program: the beginning. *Cancer*. 2014 Aug 15;120 Suppl 16(0 16):2540-8. doi: 10.1002/cncr.28820. PMID: 25099896; PMCID: PMC4481738.

ⁱⁱⁱ IARC Working Group on the Evaluation of Cancer Preventive Strategies, IARC Handbooks of Cancer Prevention: Cervical Cancer Screening. *International Agency for Research on Cancer: Lyon, France*, 2022. 18.

^{iv} Gangnon RE, Sprague BL, Stout NK, et al. The contribution of mammography screening to breast cancer incidence trends in the United States: an updated age-period-cohort model. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev*. 2015;24(6):905–912.

^v Holt HK, Peterson CE, MacLaughlan David S, et al. Mediation of Racial and Ethnic Inequities in the Diagnosis of Advanced-Stage Cervical Cancer by Insurance Status. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2023;6(3):e232985. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.2985.

^{vi} American Cancer Society. *Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2019-2020*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society, 2019.