

Public urged to follow American Cancer Society guidelines

Written by

Thursday, 17 December 2009 16:08

Due to recent public discussions about mammograms and the time table women should follow - and the apparent confusion these discussions have created, the American Cancer Society is issuing a reminder about the Society's screening guidelines for several cancers. This reminder is important due to the evidence that continues to show the positive impact screenings have in several areas.

In the U.S. death rates from breast cancer in women have been declining since 1990, due in large part to early detection by mammography screening and improvements in treatment. Cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates have decreased 67% over the past three decades with most of the reduction attributed to the Pap test, which detects cervical cancer and precancerous lesions. Early screening for colorectal cancer can identify and remove precancerous abnormalities preventing cancer altogether. Our general guidelines are as follows:

Breast cancer

For women in their 20s and 30s, it is recommended that clinical breast examination (CBE) be part of a periodic health examination, preferably at least every three years. Women aged 40 and over should continue to receive a clinical breast examination as part of a periodic health examination, preferably annually. Women should begin annual mammography at age 40.

Colon and rectal cancer

Beginning at age 50, both men and women at average risk for developing colorectal cancer should use one of several screening tests available. The tests that are designed to find both early cancer and polyps are preferred if these tests are available to you and you are willing to have one of these more invasive tests. Talk to your doctor about which test is best for you.

Prostate cancer

Health care providers should discuss the potential benefits and limitations of prostate cancer early detection testing with men and offer the PSA (Prostate-Specific Antigen) blood test and the DRE (Digital Rectal Examination) annually, beginning at age 50, to men who are at average risk of prostate cancer, and who have a life expectancy of at least 10 years. The American Cancer Society does not support routine testing for prostate cancer at this time. The Society does believe that health care professionals should discuss the potential benefits and limitations of prostate cancer early detection testing with men before any testing begins.

Cervical cancer

Cervical cancer screening should begin approximately three years after a woman begins having vaginal intercourse, but no later than 21 years of age.

Screening should be done every year with conventional Pap tests or every two years using liquid-based Pap tests. Testing may be done at a longer interval after a pattern of normal tests has been established, and may in later years be stopped if certain criteria are met.

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These guidelines can be viewed in greater detail by going to www.cancer.org/guidelines. The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a century of experience to save lives and end suffering from cancer.

As a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers, the American Cancer Society fights for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. The organization save lives by helping people stay well by preventing cancer or detecting it early; helping people get well by being there for them during and after a cancer diagnosis; by finding cures through investment in groundbreaking discovery; and by fighting back by rallying lawmakers to pass laws to defeat cancer and by rallying communities worldwide to join the fight.

As the nation's largest non-governmental investor in cancer research, contributing nearly \$3.4 billion, the American Cancer Society turns what it know about cancer into action. As a result, more than 11 million people in America who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will be celebrating birthdays this year.

To learn more about us or to get help, call us anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.