

Personally Relevant Information about Screening Mammography



A Newsletter Created Just for Jane Doe

More Information Just for YOU

Women need to consider the benefits and limitations of mammograms to make informed choices.

That's where PRISM comes in. PRISM is a program of Duke University Medical Center and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina. We are here to help women like you make informed decisions about getting mammograms. The project is for both those women who are getting mammograms and those who are not. It is also for current and past members of Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

Last year, we interviewed you and then created a booklet just for you. You also talked with Linda

James, a PRISM health advisor.

This newsletter tells you where you stand on the issues now and what other women

in PRISM are doing. It also updates you on your risk and answers any questions you told us about. We hope this newsletter will help you decide how often you should get mammograms. Read on to learn the latest! ❀

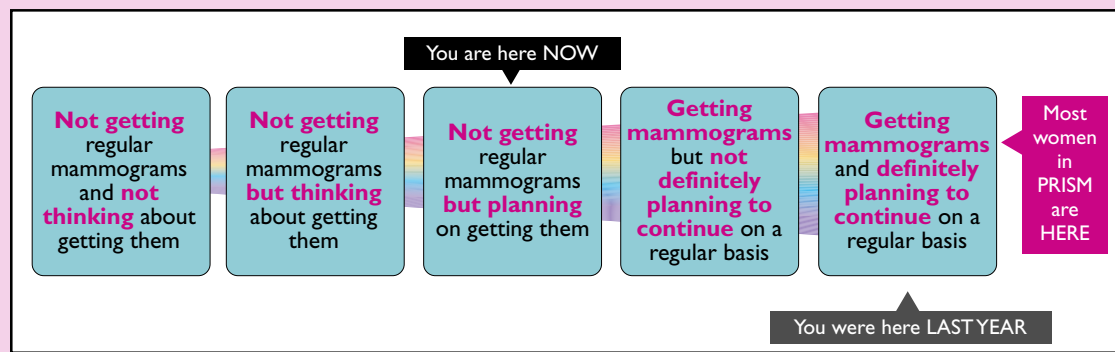


Taking Steps for Good Health

You're on your way to good health! A few weeks ago, you told us that you have not had a mammogram within the last year, but you are planning to get one in the next year.

Congratulations on making a smart decision to protect your health!

Most women in their 50s are getting regular mammograms. In fact, 64% of women in their 50s who are taking part in PRISM are doing so. We hope you will join the other women your age who are taking care of their health by getting mammograms every year. **So take action!** ❀



Has Your Risk Changed?

The booklet you received last year said that your chance of getting breast cancer in the next ten years was **5.2%**. This estimate was based on a mathematical model called the Gail Model. You may be wondering if your risk has changed since then.

For most women any changes in risk are very, very small. Even though you are a year older, your risk has increased by **less than 1%**. Being one year older changes your risk only a little. Because the change in your risk is so small, we have not re-figured your score. ❁



Answering *YOUR* Questions About Mammograms

Dr. Don Bradley, MD
Vice President, Healthcare Management
Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina



BlueCross BlueShield
of North Carolina

? I haven't gotten around to getting a mammogram. How important is it to get one on a regular basis?

Getting regular mammograms is very important because they are the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat and cure. Check with your doctor or mammogram provider to find a place and time that will be easiest for you and your busy schedule. Schedule your appointment a couple months in advance and write it on your calendar. Then, you'll have time to adjust to your schedule. If your mammography facility and doctor's office are near each other, try to schedule your mammogram on the same day as your annual check-up. Then, you will get both done at once and have only one date to remember.

? How can I stay up-to-date about breast cancer and mammography?

Staying up-to-date can be a challenge! If you have specific questions about breast cancer or mammography, call the Cancer Information Service (CIS) at 1-800-4-CANCER. The CIS is a nationwide telephone service for the general public, cancer patients and their families, and health professionals. You can also contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or www.cancer.org.

Breast Cancer and Heredity

Two genes, called **BRCA1** and **BRCA2**, recently were found. Changes in these genes, called alterations or mutations, increase the chance of getting breast cancer. People who have alterations in BRCA1 have an increased risk of breast, ovarian, colon, and prostate cancers. BRCA2 is rare, but also increases breast cancer risk. **Only 5-10% of breast cancers are inherited.**

Women are more likely to have BRCA1 or BRCA2 alterations if they have breast cancer diagnosed at an early age and in both breasts, if many of their relatives have breast or ovarian cancer (especially at early ages), if male relatives have breast cancer, and if their relatives have other types of cancer that may be related to BRCA1 or BRCA2. Some alterations also appear more often in certain ethnic groups, such as Ashkenazi Jews. If you are concerned about your breast cancer risk, please talk to your doctor. There are blood tests to look for genetic alterations.

Most Women Are Getting Regular Mammograms!

Most women in their 50s **are** getting regular mammograms. Sixty-four percent of women in the PRISM project who are in their 50s are getting a mammogram every year.

64% of women in the PRISM project are getting a mammogram every year!

Today, it's not a matter of whether you should be screened but when and how often. ❀

Reap the Benefits of Mammograms!

5 reasons women in PRISM say they get regular mammograms

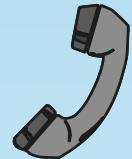
- 1** Mammograms save the lives of women age 50 and older.
- 2** Women whose breast cancer is found early may be able to have breast-saving surgery.
- 3** Women whose breast cancer is found early may have more treatment options.
- 4** Mammograms help women feel in control of their health.
- 5** Mammograms give women peace of mind that they do not have breast cancer.

How to Have A Hassle-Free Mammogram

6 Easy Steps:

- 1** See your doctor for a check-up and breast exam, and to get an order for your mammogram.
- 2** Find out if your doctor's office makes your mammography appointment, or if you need to do it.
- 3** If **you** need to make the appointment, ask your doctor to recommend a participating mammography provider or contact the Blue Cross and Blue Shield customer service department to select one. Then, call the facility to schedule your appointment a few weeks in advance. Some places have a waiting list.
- 4** Allow about 30 minutes for your mammogram in addition to travel time.
- 5** Wear pants or a skirt to your appointment. Then you will have to take off only your shirt or blouse for the exam.
- 6** Do not wear deodorant or a necklace to your appointment. They can affect the quality of your mammogram.

***From the Desk of
Linda James,
Health Advisor***



Dear Mrs. Doe,

I enjoyed talking with you last year about your booklet from PRISM. I hope that you found our conversation helpful, and that I answered your questions about breast cancer and mammography screening.

I will be calling to touch base with you about this newsletter in a couple of weeks. I look forward to talking with you soon!

Linda



Where Do You Stand On Getting Regular Mammograms?

The first column in each chart tells you, for a woman your age, what may happen if you **DO** get regular mammograms. The second column tells you what may happen if you **DO NOT**.

Here are the LIMITATIONS you should think about ...

What May Happen If You DO Get Regular Mammograms:

- ❖ There is a **25%** chance that you will have a mammogram that finds a breast problem that turns out not to be cancer. This means that about one out of four women may need extra tests to find this out.
- ❖ There is a **10%** chance that your mammogram will miss a cancer that is present.
- ❖ You may feel some **discomfort** or pain during a mammogram. This lasts for only a few seconds.

What May Happen If You DO NOT Get Regular Mammograms:

- ❖ Breast cancer may not be found **until after you have symptoms**, when it is often harder to treat and cure.

Here are the BENEFITS you should think about ...

What May Happen If You DO Get Regular Mammograms:

- ❖ Your chance of dying from breast cancer is **reduced by about 30%**.
- ❖ If you have breast cancer, mammograms can find it very early — up to 2 years before you or your doctor can feel it and when the cancer is as small as the head **on a straight pin**.
- ❖ If you have breast cancer that is found early, you may have **more treatment choices**, including breast-saving surgery.

What May Happen If You DO NOT Get Regular Mammograms:

- ❖ Your chance of dying from breast cancer is **not reduced**.
- ❖ If you have breast cancer, it may not be found in early stages. Most women cannot feel a lump until it has grown to the **size of a pea**.
- ❖ If you have breast cancer, it may not be found in early stages. **More extensive treatment** may be needed.

As you decide how often to get mammograms, be sure to weigh these benefits and limitations.



What Do *YOU* Need to Make Your Decision About Mammograms?

You told us that you did not have enough information to make a decision about your mammograms. Here are some suggestions that may help you figure out what you still need to make your decision. **Then you can take action!**

Get Advice From Your Doctor

- ❖ Write down any questions or concerns you have about mammograms and make an appointment to talk with your doctor.
- ❖ If you do not have a doctor, call the Blue Cross and Blue Shield customer service department to select one in the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC network. Then set up your appointment.

Get Support From Others

- ❖ Talk with a friend or a female relative who gets regular mammograms.
- ❖ Talk with people who matter to you, such as your doctor, your family and your friends, to find out what they think about when to get mammograms.

Take Time To Read and Think

- ❖ Read the articles in this newsletter.
- ❖ Set aside some time to think about your breast cancer risk and the benefits and limitations of mammograms. Use this newsletter to help you think about these issues.
- ❖ If you still have the booklet we sent you last year, review the section on ***Weighing Your Own Choices About Breast Cancer Screening***.

Start thinking soon because taking a long time to think is a decision to delay.

Ask For Help From Others

- ❖ Ask a friend or relative to remind you of your appointment, to give you a ride, or to take care of family members while you get your mammogram.
- ❖ Call your doctor's office or the Blue Cross and Blue Shield customer service department to find out how to set up your appointment, to get directions to the mammography facility or to get any other information or help you need.

Find Out More Information About Breast Cancer Or Mammography

Check out these organizations:

Cancer Information Service of the National Cancer Institute

1-800-4-CANCER

<http://www.nci.nih.gov> or

<http://cancernet.nci.nih.gov>

American Cancer Society

1-800-ACS-2345

www.cancer.org

Personal Health Advisor of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC

Personal Care Plan 1-800-999-1629

MedPoint (POS) 1-800-999-1657

PPO Select (Copay) .. 1-800-999-1652

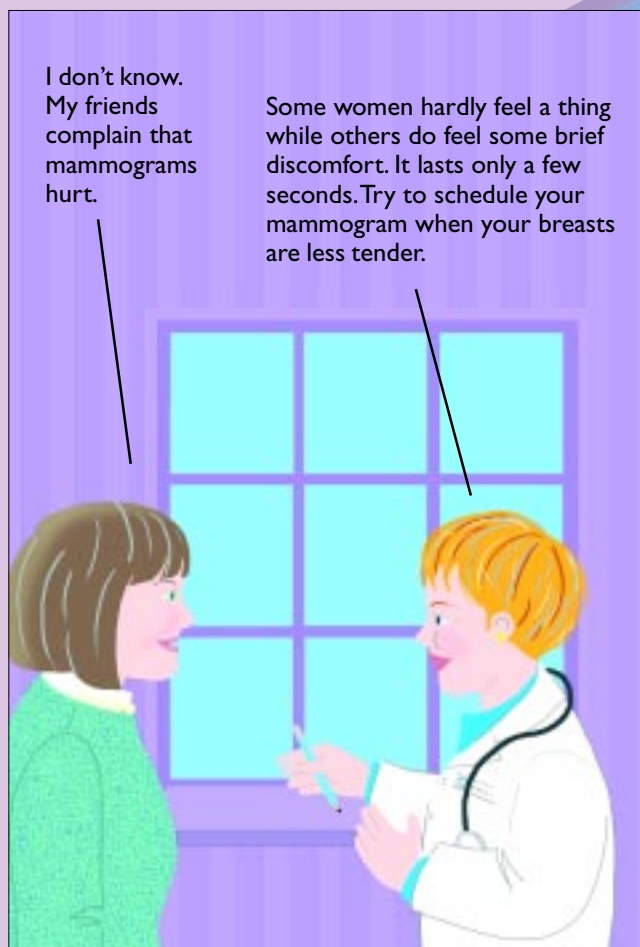
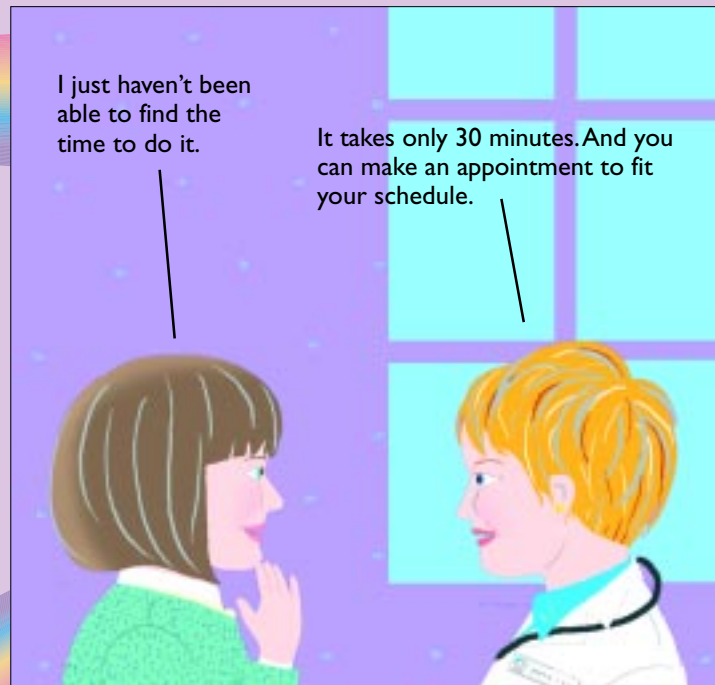
The booklet we sent you last year has a more complete list of organizations to contact for information on breast cancer and mammography.



Kate's Decision

About Getting Mammograms

Kate is talking with her new doctor, Dr. Smith.



What You Need to Know About Mammograms

- * Regular mammograms reduce the chances of dying from breast cancer by 17% for women in their 40s and by 30% in women age 50 and older. **All women who are 40 and older benefit from regular mammograms.**
- * Seventy-five percent of all breast cancer cases occur in women age 50 and older. **Age makes a difference!**
- * Mammograms and breast exams by a health care provider are the best ways to find breast cancer early. **Even though each exam alone can sometimes miss a cancer that is present, together they find most breast cancers.**
- * Mammograms may find breast problems that require extra tests, or even surgery, to rule out cancer. **Even though having more tests or breast surgery is worrisome, you are better off having the tests to be on the safe side. In 8 of 10 cases, the problem is not cancer.**

Extra! Extra!

There are exciting new results about breast cancer prevention. A drug called Tamoxifen prevents breast cancer in women who are at high risk for getting the disease.

A large six-year study funded by the National Cancer Institute showed that Tamoxifen cut cancer rates almost in half (45%) among the women taking the drug compared to those who did not. The women who were in the study were at high risk of getting breast cancer. Tamoxifen has not been tested in women who have an average or low risk for breast cancer.



Although Tamoxifen helps prevent breast cancer, it has some serious side effects, such as an increased chance of getting uterine cancer and blood

clots. For these reasons,

Tamoxifen is not for everyone. Raloxifene, a drug used to treat osteoporosis, is also being studied for its ability to prevent breast cancer. On September 2nd, 1998, the FDA approved the use of Tamoxifen for prevention of breast cancer. Women interested in using Tamoxifen or Raloxifene should talk with their doctors about them. *

The Next Step

We hope this newsletter has helped you think more about the importance of getting regular mammograms. If you have any questions about breast cancer and mammography, please talk with your doctor.

Take action and get a mammogram soon!

