

Health and Economic Benefits of Breast Cancer Interventions

- 272,454 new cases of breast cancer were reported among women in 2021, and 42,211 women died of it in 2022.
- Breast cancer has the highest treatment cost of any cancer, accounting for 14% of costs (\$29.8 billion) in 2020.
- Breast cancer screening can find cancers early when they are easier to treat, and reduces late-stage diagnoses, deaths, and treatment costs.



Breast cancer in the United States

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States, and [breast cancer](#) is one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers in women.^{[1](#)} The risk of breast cancer increases with age. About 83% of breast cancer diagnoses each year are among women aged 50 or older.^{[1](#)}

Quick facts

- 272,454 new cases of breast cancer were reported among women in 2021, and 42,211 women died of it in 2022.^{[1](#)}
- Death rates have been going down, but disparities persist.^{[1](#)} The rate of new breast cancer cases is highest among non-Hispanic White women, The death rate is highest among non-Hispanic Black women.^{[1](#)}

The high cost of breast cancer

The total annual medical cost for breast cancer in 2020 was \$29.8 billion:^{[2](#)}

- Breast cancer has the highest treatment cost of any cancer, accounting for 14% of costs in 2020—\$26.2 billion for medical services and \$3.5 billion for prescription drugs.
- If cancer diagnosis and treatment were divided into phases of care, then the initial phase would be the first year after a diagnosis, the end-of-life phase would be the year before death from cancer, and continuing care phase would be the time in between these two phases. The average per-patient costs for medical services were highest for the end-of-life phase (\$76,100), followed by the initial care phase (\$35,000) and continuing care phase (\$3,500).
- The average per-patient costs for oral prescription drugs were highest for the end-of-life phase (\$2,700), followed by the initial care phase (\$1,100) and continuing care phase (\$830).

Strategies that work

CDC is working to prevent cancer, detect it early, and improve the health of people with cancer, which can save lives and reduce health care costs.

To help find breast cancer early, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends that women aged 40 to 74 who are at average risk of breast cancer get a mammogram every 2 years.^{[3](#)}

Benefits of using proven strategies

Breast cancer screening can:

- **REDUCE** deaths. Compared to no screening, screening every 2 years for women aged 50 to 74 reduces breast cancer deaths by 26%, or 7 deaths averted for every 1,000 women screened.[4](#)
- **DECREASE** the number of women diagnosed with late-stage cancer. Screening has contributed to a 29% reduction in the number of women diagnosed with breast cancer that has spread to other parts of the body.[5](#)
- **DETECT** cancer sooner when it is easier to treat. Almost 99% of women diagnosed with breast cancer at the earliest stage live for 5 years or more, compared to about 32% of those diagnosed at the most advanced stage.[1](#)
- **REDUCE** health care spending. Breast cancers diagnosed at an early stage are much less expensive to treat than those diagnosed at a late stage.[67](#)

What is CDC doing?

CDC's [National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program](#) (NBCCEDP) helps women with low incomes who are uninsured or underinsured get access to timely breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnosis services. Congress passed the [Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act](#), which allows states to use Medicaid to cover treatment for women diagnosed with cancer through the NBCCEDP.

The NBCCEDP supports all 50 states, the District of Columbia, 5 U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands, 2 U.S. Territories, and 13 American Indian or Alaska Native tribes or tribal organizations.

NBCCEDP strategies include:

- Funding screening and diagnostic services for eligible women.
- Providing case management to help women navigate a complex health system.
- Supporting population-based approaches that increase high-quality breast and cervical cancer screening.

Since 1991, NBCCEDP-funded programs have:

- Served more than 6.3 million women.
- Provided more than 16.3 million breast and cervical cancer screening exams.
- Diagnosed 78,915 invasive breast cancers and 25,029 premalignant breast lesions.

Spotlight

About [5.3% of U.S. women](#) aged 40 to 64 were eligible for NBCCEDP breast cancer screening services during 2016–2017, based on income and lack of health insurance. The program served 15% of eligible women during this time.

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