

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Early Detection: The Best Line of Defense Against Breast Cancer

Breast cancer screening is one of the best defenses against this challenging illness. Most women are likely to have regular mammogram screenings; however, women with disabilities are less likely to have been screened within the recommended guidelines. To encourage women with disabilities to get screened for breast cancer, CDC is promoting the facts about breast cancer and tips to make getting a quality mammogram and clinical examination easier through its campaign "Breast Cancer Screening: *The Right to Know*." If someone is diagnosed with breast cancer and they have a disability, it's crucial that they thoroughly discuss cancer treatment options with their doctor.

Breast Cancer and Disability Mortality Rates

A recent study found that the rate of death for people with disabilities was higher than for those without after both groups had been treated for early breast cancer. Treatment may be more challenging for someone with a disability who has also been diagnosed with breast cancer. Those using wheelchairs or walkers could be prevented from full mobility if a total mastectomy or extensive dissection of the lymph nodes weakens their upper torso or arms. Patients with certain physical impairments may be unable to undergo radiation therapy due to an inability to raise their arm or lie in one position. A lack of reliable accessible transportation can inhibit a person's ability to complete a full course of radiation treatment.

Know the Facts: Women with Disabilities and Breast Cancer

About 30% of women aged 40 years or older have a disability. In the United States in 2008, 76.2% of women aged 40 or older reported having a mammogram in the past two years, while women with a disability have a lower reported mammography rate than women without a disability (72.2% vs. 77.8%).

What to Consider with Cancer Treatment Options

The method of cancer treatment may be affected by one or more of the following conditions:

- A higher than normal risk of infection
- Weakness in the upper body
- Spasms or other uncontrollable movements

It is important to discuss the impact of various breast cancer treatments with the oncologist before deciding on a plan of action and this will help to determine the best cancer treatment options based on individual circumstances. The more knowledgeable a person is about cancer treatment plans and their own condition, the easier it will be to arrive at the best treatment option.



Getting Screened: Tips for Women with Disabilities

Here are some tips to make it easier to get a quality mammogram and clinical exam:

When scheduling a mammography, ask:

- How should I dress?
- How do I prepare if I use a wheelchair or a scooter?
- Can the machine be adjusted so I can remain seated?
- How long is the appointment and can I have additional time if I need it?

Let the scheduling staff know that you can/cannot::

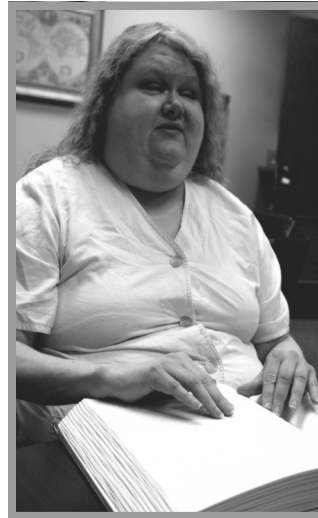
- Sit upright with or without assistance
- Lift and move your arms
- Transfer from your chair/scooter
- Undress/dress without assistance

Let the staff know of other special needs, such as:

- Sign language interpreters
- Written material
- Personal assistant services

When preparing for your mammogram, remember:

- Wear a blouse that opens in the front
- Wear a bra that you can easily remove
- Do not wear deodorant or body powder
- Talk to your healthcare provider about any disability-related concerns



North Dakota
Disability Health Project



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Vision:

All people in ND have access to information and services they need to maintain good health and wellness. There are no health disparities between people with and without disabilities that are based solely on the presence of a disability.

Pay It Forward.....

Pass it on to others who may find this information helpful.

Sources:

- Disaboom Health Team @<http://www.disaboom.com/breast-cancer/breast-cancer-and-people-with-disabilities-a-deadly-combination>
- PubMed Disparities in Breast Cancer Treatment and Survival for Women with Disabilities @<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17088576>
- CDC Information for Women with Disabilities about Breast Cancer @<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/BreastCancerDisabilities>

Resources:

- To learn more about breast cancer prevention visit the National Breast Cancer awareness web site at www.nbcam.org
- For more information on how having a disability may impact breast cancer care, visit BreastCancer.Org
- Learn more about *The Right to Know* campaign's resources & materials like tip sheets by visiting the website: www.cdc.gov/righttoknow

The ND Disability Health Project can provide technical assistance to assist with health promotion, staff training and education, and disability awareness. Contact us at 800.233.1737 or visit our website at www.ndcpd.org/health.

