

Mammograms at 40?

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force updated its breast cancer screening recommendations.

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Women at average risk for breast cancer should begin mammogram screenings at age 40 instead of 50, recommends a draft statement from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, whose previous guidelines on the matter were issued in 2016. The new proposal follows a review by the group's members of more recent and inclusive science about breast cancer in people under 50, notably data regarding racial inequities. The updated recommendations "will save more lives among all women," Wanda Nicholson, MD, MPH, the task force's vice chair, told CNN. "This is particularly important for Black women, who are 40% more likely to die from breast cancer." Nicholson cautioned, however, that screenings aren't enough to address disparities.

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network already recommends annual mammograms for all women 40 and older at average risk, and the American Cancer Society offers similar guidance. But the task force holds particular weight. The Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) mandates that health insurance cover preventive services that receive a grade A or B from the task force. (The previous mammogram recommendations scored a B.) This summer, the task force accepted public comments on its proposed guidance. A final recommendation is forthcoming.
