Many Women Delay or Skip Cancer Screenings, Survey Finds

Cost, anxiety and lack of time and information can deter women from getting recommended health screenings.

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A recent survey revealed that more than 40% of women skipped or delayed a screening recommendation by a health care professional, especially for cancer.

About one in five women worldwide will develop cancer in their lifetime. Regular screenings are crucial for detecting cancers early, when treatment is more likely to be successful and cancer is less likely to spread to other parts of the body.

Conducted by Gallup for the medical tech company Hologic, the survey found that nine in 10 of the 4,001 U.S. adult women respondents acknowledged the importance of regular preventive health screenings for cancer, heart disease, sexually transmitted infections and more.

Despite this, 43% of women said they skipped or delayed a recommended screening. What's more, these women said they were more likely to skip screening for breast cancer (41%), colorectal cancer (33%) and cervical cancer (35%).

Anxiety, cost, concerns about pain or discomfort, lack of time or not believing the screening was necessary were among the top reasons cited for forgoing preventive health screenings. What's more, about 11% reported having had a negative experience with being screened or missing an appointment that they did not reschedule.

Lack of information and communication were other reasons women avoided health screenings. Only about 42% of respondents felt "very confident" about which health screenings they needed.

About 31% of Gen Z respondents and 24% of millennials said it was difficult to find relevant patient health information. While most women (67%) said they do not trust influencers or other public figures on social media to provide accurate health information, some nonetheless turn to platforms such as TikTok for information. In fact, about 55% of adult Gen Zers ages 18 to 26 said they use TikTok most often for health information.

The survey emphasizes discussing the importance of screenings with doctors.

When observing screening habits by race, 79% of Black women highly valued health screenings, but many were less likely to have had a conversation with a medical professional about them. Despite this, Black women were still much less likely to skip or delay a screening (27%) compared with Latina women (41%), Asian (47%) and white women (47%).

Survey authors said lack of access to high-quality health care, costs of screening, mistrust of the medical system and other unmet needs also contribute to low screening rates.

“There is no one-size-fits-all solution; collaboration is needed from stakeholders across sectors to ensure all women get the screenings and care they need and deserve,” the survey report said.

Click here for the full survey.

To read more, click #Routine Screening or #Early Detection. There, you’ll find headlines such as “Start Breast Cancer Screening at Age 40?” “FDA Approves Blood Test for Colon Cancer” and “FDA Approves HPV Tests That Allow for Self-Collection in a Health Care Setting."

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