

Mammography Facts: Women with Disabilities in Oregon

Q: How many women in Oregon have a disability?

According to the 2007 BRFSS, over 20% of Oregon women live with a disability. This means that 1 out of every 5 women screened for breast cancer might have a disability.

Q: Are the chances of developing breast cancer different for women with disabilities than women in general?

No, women with disabilities have the same chance of developing breast cancer as women in general. Women with disabilities may be at higher risk due to factors like obesity, not having children or having children later in life, radiation exposure, or not getting preventative screenings which can lead to delayed diagnosis.

Q: Do women with disabilities get mammography screenings more or less often than women in general?

Studies show that women with disabilities are three times less likely to have had a mammogram within the past year than women in general (age 45 and up).

- Rates of screening vary for different types of disability
 - Nationally, almost two-thirds of women with severe disabilities are less likely to ever have a mammogram (aged 65+)
 - In Oregon, women with cognitive disabilities are less likely than women without cognitive disabilities to have had a mammogram in the past two years

Q: What are some barriers that women with disabilities face when trying to get a mammogram?

Physical Barriers include not having transportation, not being able to get into the building, the screening room being too small and not having adjustable mammography equipment.



Providers can create barriers by not addressing the needs of a woman with a disability as she sees them. This can happen when they don't see past the disability to establish preventive care measures. Another issue is that appointments are often not long enough to accommodate a person's special needs.

Attitudes of women with disabilities can also be a barrier towards care. They may feel overwhelmed by other personal health issues and worry about burdening others. They may have had a bad experience with previous screening and prefer not to go through it again.

Informational barriers happen when women with disabilities are not provided the right breast health education, when health advertisements and pamphlets do not reflect their needs or include images of women with disabilities.

Thanks to the following for providing information:

1. American Association on Health & Disability www.aahd.us
2. Behavioral Risk Surveillance System <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/index.htm>
3. Susan G. Komen for the Cure www.komen.org
4. The Oregon Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, contact BCCP.info@state.or.us
5. The Oregon Office on Disability and Health www.oidd.org/cca/oodh/
6. The Oregon Partnership for Cancer Control's Breast Health Task Force www.healthoregon.org/cancer
7. Women with Disabilities Health Equity Coalition (WoWDHEC) www.wowdhec.org

This publication was made possible, in part, by a grant from Susan G. Komen for the Cure (NR-07-25012) and funding by the American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD). Permission to reprint is granted to OHSU for the sole purpose of education and awareness. AAHD has made every effort to ensure the information is accurate and AAHD accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for consequences of any inaccurate or misleading data or statements.

This publication is available in alternate formats upon request.

Oregon Office on Disability and Health
707 SW Gaines Street
Portland, OR 97239
Phone: 503-494-3331
www.oidd.org/cca/oodh/

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Printed [08/11/2009]