

# Early Detection: The First Step To Beating Breast Cancer

(NAPSA)—Between family and careers, women are busier than ever, which means they may be putting off one of the very things that could save their lives—scheduling mammograms.

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death among women. A National Cancer Institute study found that one in eight women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime. However, nearly 96 percent of women who are diagnosed at an early stage survive for more than five years, according to the American Cancer Society.

“The earlier breast cancer is found, the better the chances of successful treatment,” said Cynthia Foss Bowman, MD, FCAP, a pathologist at Northshore Long Island Jewish Healthcare System in Hyde Park, N.Y. “The longer a cancer goes undetected, the more likely it will spread, affecting other organs.”

The exact cause of breast cancer is still unknown but certain risk factors are linked to the disease. “The biggest risk factors for breast cancer are female gender and aging,” according to Dr. Bowman. Other risk factors include:

- **Family history:** Women whose close blood relatives have had breast cancer are at higher risk for getting the disease themselves. Having a mother, a sister or a daughter with breast cancer nearly doubles a woman’s risk.

- **Personal history of breast cancer:** Women with cancer in one breast have a greater chance of developing a new cancer (not just a recurrence of the earlier cancer) in another part of the same breast or in the other breast.

- **History of radiation treatment:** Women who had chest area



radiation treatment as children or young women have a significantly increased risk for breast cancer.

Having a regular high-quality mammogram in addition to a clinical breast exam is one of the most important things a woman can do to prevent breast cancer. Mammograms can help detect cancer before it can be felt in a self-exam or clinical breast exam.

The College of American Pathologists suggests that all women 40 years and older should have annual mammograms, based on their physician’s recommendation. Women between the ages of 20 and 39 should have a clinical breast exam every three years. All women 20 and older should conduct a breast self-exam every month.

The College of American Pathologists provides a free Web site that reminds people to schedule annual health tests such as mammograms. Simply visit [MyHealthTestReminder.com](http://MyHealthTestReminder.com) to select the day on which you would like to be reminded to schedule a mammogram. On that date, you will receive an e-mail reminding you to call your doctor or health care provider to schedule an appointment.