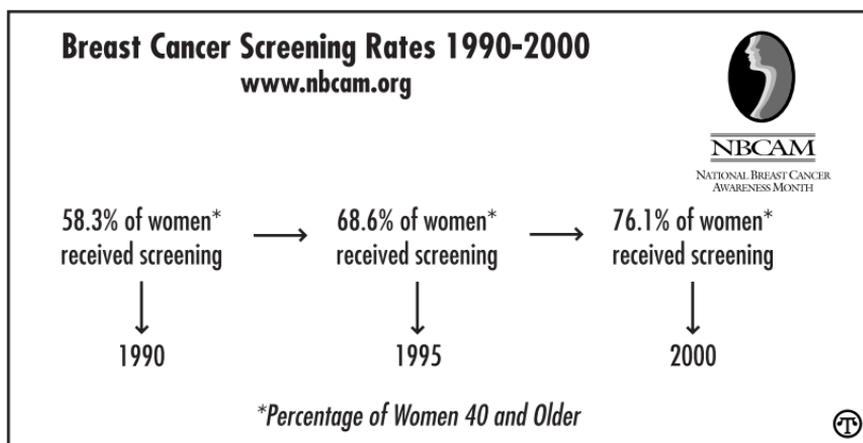


Informed Women Understand The Value Of Mammography Screening



(NAPSA)—It may be surprising that over the past two decades, breast cancer incidence has steadily increased. Yet as incidence increases, mortality decreases as more and more women are being diagnosed with breast cancer in its earliest stages. In fact, more than two million survivors are alive in the United States today. The reason for the growth is due in large part to the increase in utilization of mammography screening and women practicing good breast health.

Mammography remains the single most effective method of early detection today. A recent analysis by the American Cancer Society says women who get annual screenings reduce their risk of dying from breast cancer by 63 percent, about double than what was previously thought. While efforts to encourage mammography screening have benefited women, access to age-appropriate screening may be difficult to a woman unaware of good breast health practices, especially for minority populations such as Native Americans, Hispanic and African-American women.

Currently, African-American women have a higher mortality rate from breast cancer than white women. But for African-American women whose breast cancers are diagnosed early, survival reached 89 percent. Many African-American women believe that breast cancer is a white woman's disease, that only people with a family history need to get mammograms, or that breast cancer is an automatic death sentence. None are true.

Minority women are at a particular disadvantage as they have been less likely to have regular

mammography screenings, perhaps due to low income, no insurance coverage, or lack of appropriate messages to inform them. Studies indicate that the gap between white and African-American women may be closing, but Hispanic and Native American women are still behind in having annual mammograms that are needed for early detection of breast cancer. Overall, the proportion of women age 40 years and older receiving mammograms increased steadily, from 58.3 percent in 1990 to 76.1 percent in 2000, according to Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

It is important that women realize that access to mammography is available. Thousands of women take advantage of government resources available to women without insurance. Resources such as the **National Breast Cancer Awareness Month Campaign** provide information on its Web site, www.nbcam.org. The site searches the Web sites of the Board of Sponsors, a group of 17 national public service organizations, professional associations, and government agencies including the American Cancer Society, the National Cancer Institute and the AstraZeneca Healthcare Foundation on a search engine called **Hot Topics**. Also available on the site is information on free breast and cervical cancer screening from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) program for low-income women, 40-64 years of age, who have no health insurance or are under-insured.

Women need to be aware of the facts, because screening is important for EVERY woman and early detection saves lives.