




# Breast Health Screening among Native Americans





## WHEN YOU HAVE A MAMMOGRAM:

 The machine presses paddles against the top and bottom of the breast when the X-rays are taken. Then the machine presses the breast from side to side to help check your lymph nodes.

 You may feel some discomfort from the paddles pressing on your breasts, but this does not last long.

 The amount of radiation you are exposed to is the same as when you take a 30 minute walk in the sunshine.

 It only takes about 15 minutes to have a mammogram.

 You can feel a sense of empowerment in taking care of your health.

She encourages other women to go get their ... early breast cancer check-up.

**Dominga Rosetta**  
[Santo Domingo Tribe]  
*(translated by daughter)*



### ***Breast Cancer is increasing every year among Native American Women***

- We do not know how to "prevent" breast cancer ... yet
- We do know how to find breast cancer when it is just beginning to grow and when it may be cured.

## RISK FACTORS

### Definition of "High Risk"

"High Risk" means having characteristics that are *more likely* to develop breast cancer than someone who doesn't have those "risks."

"High Risk" does not mean the woman will definitely get breast cancer -- it only means she is *more likely!*









**NOTE:** A woman does not need to be "high risk" to get breast cancer.



**Jennie Joe**  
[Navajo]

I kept saying to myself, I just am not the high risk type. I mean, it has never been in my family before and from what I knew from . . . my health background . . . none of the risk factors seemed to be in my corner, ... I just couldn't believe it. I kept saying, well, maybe they made a mistake, maybe the lab made a mistake ... I never smoked in my life ... I've always been very active and I thought I always took care of myself. I don't drink. . . . I thought I had a fairly healthy lifestyle.

## WHO MIGHT BE AT RISK FOR BREAST CANCER ?

-  Any woman as she grows older, especially over the age of 50.
-  Women who have a family history of breast cancer (mother, sister or daughter).
-  Women who have had other cancer(s) (e.g., breast, lung, ovary, colon).
-  Women who have symptoms (e.g., lumps, dimpling, or nipple discharge).
-  Women who have experienced early menstruation/"moon" (before age twelve).
-  Women who experience a late menopause, a time when their menstruation / "moon" stops (e.g., in their 50's).
-  Women who had their first birth after age 30 or women who never gave birth.
-  Women who are obese might find it hard to identify breast changes.

\* If you have one or more of these risk factors for breast cancer, this does NOT mean that you have breast cancer or will develop it. It means that you need to talk with your health care provider about these breast changes and set up a personal schedule for finding changes as early as possible through monthly breast self exams, annual clinical breast exams by your health provider, and mammograms.



## EARLY DIAGNOSIS

### WHAT IS A "MAMMOGRAM"?

A Mammogram is a safe X-ray of each breast which can help find breast cancer at a very early stage. It is not the same as a "chest X-ray" (which is NOT used to find breast cancer).

I think early diagnosis is the answer to breast cancer, to survival of breast cancer. ... .. And go in and do breast exams, that's absolutely important, I think those mammograms are vital for getting an early detection.



**Mary Lou Davis**  
[Caddo/Cherokee Tribes]



**Cyndi Thornton**  
[Western Cherokee]

Early detection. .. keep in constant touch with your body and if you find something, even if it might seem silly to you, you need to go to a health care provider or even an elder and let them know what's going on so you can get it checked out, even the littlest thing can, you know. It might . . . be nothing, but you never know. You just got to keep up with that.

**Project Supported By:**



The Graham Foundation, Colorado Springs, CO  
The Breast Cancer Fund, San Francisco, CA  
The Kettering Family Foundation, Denver, CO  
AVON Breast Health Leadership Award, NYC, NY  
Native American Cancer Initiatives Inc., Pine, CO



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**Transcriptions:** Lisa Castro  
**Organization, Coordination, Refinement:** Linda Burhansstipanov  
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[Oglala Sioux]

In Honor & Memory of: **Katherine Big Hail** [Crow]  
**Patricia Horse Johnson** [Kiowa]