

For Immediate Release
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6.3% of Coachella Valley Women over Age 40 Have Never Had a Mammogram

*October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which is an annual campaign aimed at supporting women by increasing awareness and education on breast cancer. **In this Press Release, we provide information on the topic of breast cancer, including the risk factors, health recommendations and data on our Coachella Valley population.***

Palm Desert, CA (October 12, 2020) — Only second to skin cancer, breast cancer is one of the leading types of cancer women experience in the United States.¹ Breast cancer may appear in different parts of the breast and occurs when cells begin to grow out of control.²

Screening for breast cancer does not prevent cancer, but it certainly does help. An early diagnosis may help to identify cancer in the early stages and therefore increase the chance of successful treatment. One common screening is a mammogram, which takes x-rays of the breasts. The United States Preventive Services Task Force, an organization of doctors and disease experts, recommend that women in the ages 50 to 74, get a mammogram every two years.³ Women who are between 40 to 49 should consult their doctor about when to start a mammogram and how often to get it. Women with a family history or genetic mutations may begin a mammogram screening earlier. Additionally, women at any age should let their doctor know if they are concerned about a lump or abnormality to their breasts.⁴

Data in the Coachella Valley

¹ Breast Cancer Statistics. (2020). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available online at: <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/statistics/index.htm>

² What is breast cancer? (2020). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available online at: https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/what-is-breast-cancer.htm

³ What is breast cancer screening? (2020). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available online at: https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/screening.htm

⁴ Breast Changes and Conditions. (2019). National Cancer Institute. Available online at: <https://www.cancer.gov/types/breast/breast-changes>

Approximately 6,139 women in the Coachella Valley have been diagnosed with breast cancer at some point in their life.⁵

As described previously, a critical piece of preventing later stages of breast cancer is for women to obtain routine mammogram screenings. The majority of women 40 and over in the Coachella Valley have had a mammogram at least once (93.7%). In fact, 80.9% of those women who have had a mammogram screening, had it in the past year or two.

That said, this means that **6.3% of local women over 40 have never had a mammogram, and are in need of this critical preventative health screening.** This equates to about 7,426 women in the valley who are in need of a mammogram.

Risk Factors for Breast Cancer and Recommendations

Research has shown that there are a few risk factors that increase the likelihood of developing breast cancer. Some of the risk factors are the following:

- **Age.** The risk for breast cancer increases with age as most cases are diagnosed after the age of 50.⁶
- **Genes.** Women with inherited gene changes or gene mutations are at higher risk for breast cancer. For instance, people that have inherited mutations in BRCA1 and BRCA2, genes that create tumor suppressor proteins, are more likely to develop breast cancer.⁷
- **Dense breasts.** Women with dense or non-fatty breast tissue are less likely to spot tumors on a mammogram and more likely to get breast cancer.⁸
- **Personal or family history.** The risk of breast cancer may also increase for a woman if a close relative, such as a mother, sister, or daughter has had breast cancer. Furthermore, women who have had breast cancer are more likely to get breast cancer again.⁹

While these risk factors certainly increase the odds of developing breast cancer, women can still get breast cancer without having any of the risk factors. As such, it is important to consult your doctor about screening for breast cancer, even if none of the risk factors apply to you. It is also important to note that having the aforementioned risk factors, does not mean you are certain to get breast cancer; most women have some of the risk factors and do not get breast cancer.

As mentioned previously, an early diagnosis is important for better treatment options. It is recommended that you follow expert advice and talk to your doctor or specialist about

⁵ Coachella Valley Community Health Survey. (2019). HARC. Available online at: <https://harcddata.org/coachella-valley-community-health-survey/executive-report/>

⁶ What are the risk factors? (2020). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available online at: https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/risk_factors.htm

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

breast cancer screenings. Ultimately, it is critical to regularly monitor your personal health and take necessary actions to ensure your health is optimized.

To see more statistics regarding health information in the Coachella Valley, please see our latest 2019 Executive Report at: www.HARCdata.org

To schedule an interview with Dr. Jenna LeComte-Hinely call 760.404.1945 or email jlecomte-hinely@HARCdata.org.

About HARC

HARC, Inc. (Health Assessment and Research for Communities) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing research and evaluation services related to health and wellness. HARC is funded in part by grants, donations, and the consulting services they offer. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at 760.404.1945, or visiting the organization's website at: www.HARCdata.org

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