



*Kathleen Sebelius, Governor  
Roderick L. Bremby, Secretary*

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND ENVIRONMENT

[www.kdheks.gov](http://www.kdheks.gov)

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## **October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month**

Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer diagnosed in women but screening and early detection can help identify cancer in its early stages when the disease is most treatable. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and women should become informed about their risks of developing cancer and how effective screening for the disease is.

In Kansas in 2005, 1,848 cases of female breast cancer were diagnosed and 398 women died of the disease from 2002-2006. According to the American Cancer Society, in 2008, it is estimated 182,460 new cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed and 40,500 will die from the disease in the United States.

“While incidence rates of breast cancer in the state have decreased steadily in the last 10 years, women should be aware of the great health benefits of screening for the disease with a yearly mammogram or clinical breast exam,” said Roderick L. Bremby, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. “KDHE takes a proactive stance in urging women to take care of their health and screening is a priority in detecting breast cancer at its earliest stages when it is most treatable and survivable.”

Three ways are used to screen for the disease:

- Mammogram- an x-ray of the breast is the best method to detect breast cancer early. Regular mammograms should begin at the age of 40 and be done every 1-2 years. Mammograms can lower the risk of dying from breast cancer by detecting cancer at an early, highly treatable stage.
- Clinical Breast Exam – is an examination by a doctor or nurse to feel for lumps or other changes in the breasts and should be used for women in their 20s and 30s.
- Breast self-exam- can be done by a woman on a monthly basis to self-check for change in the size and shape of the breast or under the arm. Beginning in their 20s, women should conduct monthly breast self exams.

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) statistics indicate that while mammogram and clinical breast exam rates rose during the 1990s, from 1999-2002 rates decreased by about two percent.

The decrease in screening rates nationally may be attributed to a number of factors, including a shortage of breast-imaging facilities, shortages of key medical personnel, malpractice concerns

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and financial constraints, according to the CDC. In addition, many women lack a primary health provider, are uninsured or may be recent immigrants without access to health care.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women regardless of race or ethnicity. KDHE promotes breast cancer screening for all women and provides services for age appropriate, low income, uninsured women through its Early Detection Works program. This program served about 6,000 women last year, providing clinical breast exams and mammograms through a network of providers across the state. For more information about the program, visit [www.preventionworkskansas.com](http://www.preventionworkskansas.com) or call toll free 1-877-277-1368 to see if you qualify.

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*As the state's environmental protection and public health agency, KDHE promotes responsible choices to protect the health and environment for all Kansans.*

*Through education, direct services and the assessment of data and trends, coupled with policy development and enforcement, KDHE will improve health and quality of life. We prevent illness, injuries and foster a safe and sustainable environment for the people of Kansas.*