



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Ladies First and Breast Cancer Screening Saves Lives

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BURLINGTON – A breast cancer screening study released yesterday, 29 years of research involving 130,000 women, showed that 30 percent fewer women who are screened for breast cancer die of the disease than those who are not screened.

The Swedish study highlights the importance of programs such as the Vermont Department of Health's Ladies First, which pays for women to get screened annually after the age of 40, even those women who may not have breast related complaints, or a lump, or be considered high risk with a family history of breast cancer. Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in women in Vermont, and early diagnosis greatly improves the odds of survival.

Ladies First pays for free breast and cervical cancer screenings as well as heart health screening for lower income, uninsured, or underinsured women. More than 1,300 health care providers are part of the Ladies First effort.

"This new study affirms what we have known for quite some time – screening saves lives," said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. "Ladies First has served more than 14,000 women since 2000, but we know there are many more who are eligible and could use help to access a doctor and get screened."

In 2008, 84 percent of Vermont women age 40 and older with health insurance had a mammogram in the past two years, compared to 59 percent who don't have health insurance. Eighty-two percent of women age 40 and older who have a personal physician had a mammogram in the past two years, compared to 46 percent who don't have a personal physician.

A Vermont woman living in a two-person household can earn up to \$36,425 a year and receive free services. One out of eight Vermont women are eligible for Ladies First.

For more information on the Ladies First program, visit: www.ladiesfirstvt.org.

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