

Petition To The Federal Minister Of Health By Dense Breasts Canada

Thousands of Canadian women will die if the new breast cancer screening guidelines are not revised.

In December 2018, the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care issued guidelines on breast cancer screening for women of average risk. These guidelines are used by 94,000 family doctors in their interactions with 9 million women aged 40-74. **Here's how the guidelines put women's lives at risk:**

- 1. The guidelines ignore expert advice:** There are no breast cancer experts on the Task Force. They consulted experts but ignored their input. At this point, over 130 breast cancer experts have strongly criticized the guidelines.
- 2. The guidelines ignore the importance of screening for women in their 40s:** One sixth of breast cancer deaths and 24% of the years of life lost to breast cancer are in women diagnosed in their 40s. Even with statistics like these, the Task Force does not recommend screening for women in their 40s. As a result, 4,000 Canadian women will die over the next decade if this recommendation is followed.
- 3. The guidelines advise against breast self-exams:** These exams are an important measure women can take to increase early detection of breast cancer, especially in women with dense breasts.
- 4. The guidelines exaggerate the harms of recalling women for additional testing after a mammogram:** About 10% of women are recalled for additional images and this may cause anxiety. The Task Force considers this anxiety a harm and uses it to dissuade women from screening. The anxiety is not long lasting. Better safe than sorry.
- 5. The guidelines ignore significant health benefits of early cancer detection:** The Task Force does not acknowledge the benefits of avoiding chemotherapy, avoiding mastectomy and avoiding lymphedema.
- 6. The guidelines ignore current data:** The Task Force relies on outdated and flawed studies. The obsolete studies estimate that women are 15-20% less likely to die if they have breast screening. Current studies show that women who have mammograms are actually 40-44% less likely to die of breast cancer than those who do not.
- 7. The guidelines ignore the risks of breast density:** The risks of dense breasts have been known for 40 years. Dense breasts increase the risk of developing breast cancer and increase the risk that cancer will be masked on a mammogram. The guidelines ignore the benefits of supplemental screening for women with dense breasts.
- 8. Women are being asked to make decisions about life-saving screening based on inaccurate information:** Using the new guidelines women may make decisions that may ultimately lead to a late diagnosis, unnecessary suffering and a poorer prognosis.