



Knox County Health Department

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KCHD's Service Spotlight: Women's Health Clinic

This week's spotlight highlights KCHD's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program

Knoxville, Tenn. — The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) Women's Health Clinic provides family planning services, pregnancy testing, annual exams, women's health education, and breast and cervical cancer screening for those who meet program guidelines. If women have postponed any screenings or exams over the last year, KCHD recommends resuming them, especially routine cancer screenings, as cancer was the second leading cause of death in Knox County, according to KCHD's 2019 [Community Health Assessment](#).

"Screenings are vital components of preventive health care," said KCHD social counselor Reddie McWilliams. "They are just as important as healthy diets and routine exercise."

KCHD's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program offers FREE health services including breast and cervical cancer screenings to individuals who meet income guidelines, do not have insurance or whose insurance does not cover this service. More information is available on KCHD's women's health [webpage](#).

Health experts recommend that women start receiving cervical cancer screenings starting at age 21, regardless of sexual activity, receiving one at least every three years if the results are normal. Cervical cancer screenings can also include HPV testing as certain types of HPV increase the risk of developing cervical cancer. In fact, it's one of the most common cancers found in women in the U.S. according to the [American Cancer Society](#); however, it is nearly 100 percent curable if found early. Additionally, the HPV vaccine provides safe, effective and long-lasting protection against cancers caused by HPV.

Starting at age 40, women are encouraged to receive annual screening mammograms. If they have a family history of breast cancer, they should start screenings earlier. More than 42,000 women died from breast cancer in 2020 in the United States, including 950 from Tennessee, per the National Cancer Institute.

According to the American Cancer Society, the mortality rate has declined for both diseases since the early 2000s. Experts determined this progress reflects earlier detection through screening, availability of HPV vaccines and increased awareness of symptoms, which is why it is vital to take advantage of local programs to get screened and take preventive measures.

About Knox County Health Department

The first health department in Tennessee to achieve national voluntary accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is dedicated to ensuring the conditions in which every resident can be healthy. As a chief health strategist for the community and with more than 240 team members, KCHD's broad scope of work includes convening partners to improve community health, identifying community health threats, investigating disease outbreaks, conducting extensive outreach and education, preparing for public health emergencies, providing and connecting the public with medical care, enforcing food safety and air quality laws, and more. For more information, visit www.knoxcounty.org/health.

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