



**-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-
COVID-19 is Not a Reason to Skip Your Mammogram**

(SALEM, OHIO) – October 21, 2020 – As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, Salem Regional Medical Center (SRMC) is urging residents not to put off preventive health care and important screenings, including mammograms.

According to Peter Apicella, M.D., SRMC's Chief Radiologist, "Studies show thousands of women have canceled or delayed getting their annual mammograms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, the longer that a cancer goes undetected, the more difficult it is to treat."

The National Cancer Institute estimates that disruptions in cancer screenings, like mammograms due to COVID-19, could lead to thousands of additional deaths over the next 10 years. Recent data from Quest Diagnostics, Inc. shows that the number of newly diagnosed breast cancer patients fell by nearly 52% during March- April 2020, compared to the year before; indicating that there are likely many women who may have an undiagnosed cancer.

"Screening mammograms can help find breast cancer early, before a patient feels a lump or notices other symptoms. A delay in cancer screening and diagnosis may lead to more advanced cancer with fewer treatment options," Dr. Apicella said.

About one in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. But when detected in its earliest stages and appropriately treated, the average five-year breast cancer survival rate is 98%.

Finding Cancer Early

Three-dimensional (3-D) mammography is the latest technology improving breast cancer detection at its earliest stage. SRMC offers this advanced screening tool at its main campus in Salem and at the SRMC Imaging Center at Firestone Farms TownCenter in Columbiana.

"3-D mammograms provide sharper images, leading to better and earlier detection of breast abnormalities," Dr. Apicella explained. "Our 3-D mammogram technology at both locations is accredited by the American College of Radiology, which is the gold standard for facilities providing the highest level of image quality and safety."

3-D mammography can detect up to 40% more invasive cancers than a traditional mammogram. In addition, the overall radiation dose of the 3-D examination is 30% less. SRMC's

3-D units feature the widest-angled acquisition method, which provides the greatest depth resolution and clarity of images, unlike other older 3-D mammogram equipment.

“This level of detail greatly enhances the ability to quickly and more accurately identify early cancers, especially in women with dense breasts and fibrocystic breast disease, where tumors are more difficult to find,” Dr. Apicella said.

He recommends that most women have annual mammogram screenings starting at age 40. However, those who are at high risk for breast cancer, such as women with a family history or genetic risk factors for the disease, should talk to their doctors about starting screening before age 40.

Enhanced Safety Precautions

In order to help ensure the health and well-being of patients and staff during their visit, SRMC has implemented several enhanced safety precautions at its main campus and Imaging Center at Firestone Farms. These measures include reconfigured waiting areas and scheduling that promotes social distancing, in addition to frequent sanitization of chairs, exam tables and patient care areas. Patients must wear masks to help maintain the health and safety of all patients and caregivers.

“With the pandemic likely to go on for quite some time, we want to make sure people are getting the care they need for all of their medical concerns in a very safe environment,” said Debbie Mesmer, RT (R) (CT), SRMC’s Director of Medical Imaging. “We have proactively enhanced our safety precautions so patients can feel comfortable having their medical imaging tests performed, whether it is at the hospital or our medical imaging center in Columbiana.”

Scheduled or Walk-in Mammograms

Women wishing to schedule their mammograms at SRMC’s main campus or Imaging Center at Firestone Farms TownCenter should call the hospital’s Appointment Desk at 330-332-7300.

For busy women on-the-go, convenient walk-in hours for screening mammograms are also available at the Columbiana location on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. No appointment or physician’s order is needed.