

# THE STRAITS TIMES



Woman  
found  
dead in  
idling



Mouthpiece  
of  
drowned  
Singapore



Asia  
falls for  
South  
Korean

Recommended by

## Know which cancers to screen for and when



Breast cancer screening is recommended for all women above the age of 40. Those with a strong family history of breast cancer may need to be screened at an earlier age. ST FILE PHOTO

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**Q. I am 41 years old. Is it necessary for me to go for cancer screening even though I am feeling very well?**

A. Cancer is one of the top two medical killers in Singapore. The best chance of surviving cancer is by detecting the condition early.

With advances in medical technology and knowledge, a lot of cancers are now treatable and potentially curable if the condition is discovered early.

Therefore, early detection of cancer by cancer screening is extremely important.

Checking for cancer (or for conditions that may lead to cancer) in people who have no symptoms is called screening. Screening can help doctors find and treat some types of cancer early.

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However, not all types of cancer have effective screening tests and some tests are only for people with specific genetic risks.

The recommended screening tests that are effective in detecting cancer early, where effective treatments are available for the cancers are:

- Mammography for breast cancer
- Colonoscopy for bowel cancer
- PAP smear tests for cervical cancer.

Screening tests for other cancers are available, but these are recommended only for people who are at high risk of developing that group of cancer, such as computed tomography scans for smokers, who have a higher risk of developing lung cancer.

Anyone who is above the age of 50 should go for bowel cancer screening.

Some people who are at high risk, such as those with a strong family history of the cancer or a history of polyps, may need to have bowel screening tests done at an earlier age.

Colonoscopy involves a doctor examining the whole of the inside of your bowel with a long flexible tube. Colonoscopy allows direct visualisation of the bowel wall and allows a biopsy to be taken if abnormalities are seen.

Breast cancer screening is recommended for all women above the age of 40. Some people who are at high risk, such as those who have a strong family history of breast cancer, may need to have breast screening tests done at an earlier age.

Mammography involves a radiographer who helps you to position one breast at a time between two small flat plates on the X-ray machine. The plates then press your breast firmly between them for a few moments, to take an X-ray. The compression of the breast helps to give a clear picture.

All sexually active women above the age of 21 should go for a cervical cancer screening test. The screening test involves a doctor taking a small sample of cells from the surface of your cervix.

This is done by putting an instrument called a speculum inside your vagina, then scraping the cervix with a small soft brush. The sample is sent to a laboratory where a pathologist analyses the cells and reports abnormal ones.

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