



In light of recent developments, the Society of Breast Imaging is releasing the following recommended guidance to assist members as they navigate in this unique age of "social distancing."

Society of Breast Imaging Statement on Screening in a Time of Social Distancing

The Society of Breast Imaging's core purpose is "to save lives and minimize the impact of breast cancer." To fulfill that purpose, the SBI strongly advocates for routine annual screening mammography for all women starting at age 40 because the data clearly show this is the best approach to minimizing the mortality due to breast cancer. However, the outbreak of a disease due to a novel strain of coronavirus, COVID-19, raises the difficult question of whether we can provide appropriate screening while also minimizing the impact of this pandemic to our communities.

Many of our members have voiced concern that providing routine care for asymptomatic women who may be unknowing carriers of COVID-19 places others at risk. Women seeking ongoing care for breast cancer may be immunocompromised and therefore at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 and developing a severe form of the disease. Others at potential risk include otherwise healthy patients who share waiting areas, restrooms, elevators, and handrails with those unknowingly carrying the disease. Our breast imaging technologists are also at risk, particularly given the very close person-to-person contact required to adequately position patients for high-quality imaging. Finally, maintaining full patient schedules places physicians at risk of contracting the illness. Once exposed or infected, these radiologists may not be available to care for women with more urgent breast imaging needs.

To date, the SBI is not aware of any official governmental recommendation to stop elective procedures including screening. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does have a statement that "if a community is experiencing spread of COVID-19," it is reasonable for healthcare facilities to "cancel elective and non-urgent procedures." **Given the many calls to promote social distancing as a primary means of reducing or delaying the spread of COVID-19, the SBI recommends that individual facilities delay screening breast exams for several weeks or a few months.** The advisability of delay will depend in part on the presence of active or suspected disease in the community and the ability of a facility to mitigate risk. Once the pandemic has abated and the risk to our patients, our healthcare colleagues and the community has lessened, we would urge all facilities to redouble efforts to complete all delayed screening as expeditiously as possible.

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