

New recommendations call for MRI in breast cancer

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By Maggie Fox

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Women with cancer in one breast should get an MRI scan of the other breast to make sure the cancer is not there, too, the American Cancer Society recommended on Wednesday.

Healthy women at high risk of getting breast cancer also should get magnetic resonance imaging scans, the society said.

The recommendations follow a study that shows MRI scans can detect cancer in the opposite breast 90 percent of the time. MRI found breast tumors missed by mammograms, a specialized type of X-ray.

The study, published in The New England Journal of Medicine, involved 1,000 women with cancer in one breast. The MRI scans found 30 out of 33 tumors in the other breast among the women.

"One in ten women diagnosed with cancer in one breast will develop the disease in the opposite breast. Having a better technique to find these cancers as early as possible will increase the chances of successful treatment," said NIH Director Dr. Elias Zerhouni.

The National Cancer Institute, one of the National Institutes of Health, paid for the study.

"This study gives us a clearer indication that if an MRI of the opposite breast is negative, women diagnosed with cancer in only one breast can more confidently opt against having a double, or bilateral, mastectomy," added National Cancer Institute Director Dr. John Niederhuber.

In addition, women with a close relative with such a mutation should get an MRI, the group recommended.

And women who got radiation treatment to the chest between the ages of 10 and 30, such as for Hodgkin's disease, a lymph cancer, should have MRIs.

Breast cancer will be diagnosed in more than 200,000 U.S. women this year and will kill 40,000, according to the American Cancer Society.