TuSalud

Can You Get a Cancer Screening Without Insurance?

Uninsured? Underinsured? Mammograms and other preventive cancer screenings are still available.

April 2, 2026 By Diane Mapes and Fred Hutch News Service

Catching cancer early — when it can be treated and even cured — is a cornerstone of cancer prevention. But what do you do if you don't have health insurance? Can you still get any kind of cancer screening? Or do you have to wait until you're working for someone who offers health insurance to their employees to get preventative screenings?

We turned to some of Fred Hutch Cancer Center's experts — community health educators, patient navigators and others — for their best advice on how people in Washington state can still get preventive screening for cancer even when they don't have any kind of insurance.

"Access to cancer screening is absolutely essential," said Liz Tallent, community health education manager with the Fred Hutch/University of Washington/Seattle Children's Cancer Consortium's Office of Community Outreach & Engagement, or OCOE. "It's the best tool we have for diagnosing and treating cancer early, and it needs to be available to everyone regardless of insurance status."

Looking for no-cost, low-cost cancer screening? Here's your go-to list:

2-1-1 Washington

2-1-1 Washington is a free and confidential service that connects callers to highly trained information and referral specialists. These specialists will assess your needs and provide a list of referrals to available health and human service resources in your community. Every day, WA 211 helps those who are elderly and/or disabled, those who do not speak English, those who may be having a personal crisis, those who have limited reading skills, and/or those new to their communities.

Whether you need help keeping your lights on, a referral to a local food pantry, or help finding no-

cost, low-cost cancer screenings, WA 211 is ready to help.

Simply dial 2-1-1 from anywhere in Washington state to be connected with over 17,000 resources. Referrals are usually given over the phone or can be emailed or texted to you. You can also search online. For more information, go to WA 211 or call 2-1-1.

Breast, Cervical and Colon Health Program

The Washington State Breast, Cervical, and Colon Health Program (BCCHP) provides free breast and cervical cancer screening to eligible people in Washington state. Eligibility is based on health insurance status, income and age. Programs are run by the following organizations, depending upon which county you live in.

- Public Health Seattle-King County handles Clallam, Jefferson, King and Kitsap counties.
- Citrine Health covers Island, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties.
- Confluence Health covers Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant and Okanogan counties.
- PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center covers Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Skamania, Thurston and Wahkiakum counties.
- Yakima Health District covers Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima counties.

To enroll in the BCCHP, contact the organization that runs the program in your county; they will check your eligibility and help you enroll. The BCCHP focuses on higher risk or underserved populations, including:

- People age 40 to 64
- People with limited income
- American Indian/Alaska Natives, Black/African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders
- LGBTQIA+ individuals
- People with disabilities
- People who have never or rarely been screened

For more information, visit the Washington State BCCHP website, download their free brochure or call 888-438-2247. Seattle-King County residents can find more information at the Seattle-King

County Public Health Department BCCHP website or call 800.756.5437.

Colorectal Cancer Alliance

This large national nonprofit raises money for both colorectal cancer research and public awareness regarding signs and symptoms of the disease and preventive screening options. They also provide resources for colorectal cancer (CRC) patients, survivors, caregivers and family members.

Take their colorectal cancer screening quiz here. Or visit their Resources & Support for financial assistance, to join an online patient community or to be matched with a CRC Buddy. Visit the Colorectal Cancer Alliance website or call their toll-free helpline at 877.422.2030.

Community Health Access Program

Community Health Access Program, or CHAP, is a telephone assistance program serving King County residents by connecting them to health insurance, health care services and other resources.

CHAP services are free and confidential. Call them for help getting enrolled in a health insurance program (Medicaid and other plans), or to enroll in other programs such as ORCA LIFT, food assistance, energy assistance or the Breast, Cervical and Colon Health Program.

CHAP can help you find affordable:

- Health care or insurance
- Health screening services
- Doctors, dentists, midwives or nurses
- Medical and dental clinics with sliding fees
- Support services and pregnancy tests
- Prenatal care

For more information, go to the CHAP website, download their brochure, or call 1.800.756.5437.

FindHelp

FindHelp.org's mission is to connect people and the local programs that serve them with dignity and ease.

Since 2010, FindHelp (formerly Aunt Bertha) has provided resources for basic needs including food, housing, transportation, legal services and more. A national social care network, they provide resources for food pantries and meal programs; they can also help with housing, financial assistance and health care, including no-cost and low-cost disease screening and prevention services.

For more information, go to FindHelp.org

Fred Hutch Mammogram Van

Fred Hutch's Mammogram Van is a state-of-the-art mobile mammogram clinic that travels to neighborhood locations all over the greater Seattle area to serve those seeking mammograms. Patients using the Mammogram Van will receive the same care and resources, including access to financial assistance resources, as patients who visit Fred Hutch's brick-and-mortar clinics.

Funding is available to people who are uninsured or underinsured. Simply ask about a "sponsored mammogram" when scheduling your appointment.

To learn more or find out when the Mammogram Van will be in your neighborhood, go to FredHutch.org/Mammogramvan or call 206.606.7800.

Lahai Health

Lahai Health is a large, free comprehensive primary care clinic serving people who are uninsured and living on low incomes in the Puget Sound. Patients have access to full medical exams, resources to obtain low- to no-cost prescription drugs, laboratory tests, imaging services, intensive nursing case management and referrals to medical specialists. Additionally, they offer several forms of specialty care at some sites including individualized diabetic education, physical therapy, optometry and gynecology. They also offer quarterly breast cancer screening clinics.

For more information, go to Lahai.org or call 206.363.4105.

Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho

Planned Parenthood provides care for everyone, regardless of age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, immigration status or ability to pay. They also provide free insurance enrollment help for those who want to sign up for Medicaid (Washington Apple Health) or other health insurance providers.

Preventive care is provided at Planned Parenthood, including HPV vaccine, breast cancer screening and cervical cancer prevention screenings (via HPV and Pap test).

For more information or to schedule an appointment, visit Planned Parenthood (Greater Washington and North Idaho) or call 866.904.7721.

Prevent Cancer Foundation

The Prevent Cancer Foundation is the only U.S.-based nonprofit organization solely dedicated to cancer prevention and early detection.

Since cost is often a barrier to getting the screenings people need, Prevent Cancer Foundation provides a number of resources for free and low-cost cancer screenings, testing and vaccinations. They also offer community grants and a community exchange program, among other programs.

Looking for low-cost screening options in your community? Go to the Prevent Cancer Foundation or call 703.836.4412.

Project Access Northwest

This regional nonprofit aims to improve access to specialty health care for low-income and uninsured patients. It matches volunteer specialty care providers and hospital partners with carefully pre-screened patients in need of care. Originally started in King County, it has since expanded its access across Washington state to include behavioral health and dental care.

Project Access Northwest also pays health insurance premiums for eligible patients who are unable

to get insurance through Apple Health (Washington's Medicaid program), making health insurance affordable for low-income patients. For more information, go to Project Access Northwest or call 206.788.4204.

Seattle/King County Clinic (at Seattle Center)

Seattle/King County Clinic is a volunteer-driven health clinic that occurs four days each year at Seattle Center (home of the Space Needle) that welcomes anyone in the region who struggles to access and/or afford health care.

This free "mega-clinic" offers medical, dental and vision care regardless of insurance or immigration status. The next clinic dates are April 23–26, 2026. For more information, go to Seattle/King County Clinic or call the Seattle Center information line at 206.684.7200.

Washington State Health Care Authority Apple Health (Medicaid)

Public insurance, or Medicaid, is known as Apple Health in Washington state; it provides free or low-cost health insurance coverage for low-income individuals who qualify. Covered services include primary care, emergency visits, maternity services, pediatric care, dental services, vision care, prescription medications and more.

Apple Health also provides preventative care including cancer screenings, treatment for diabetes and high blood pressure, immunization, trans health services and even help with transportation and interpretation.

To find out more or enroll in a plan, go to wahealthplanfinder.org or call 1.800.562.3022.

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http://beta.docker.tusaludmag.com/article/can-get-cancer-screening-without-insurance