

Mammography

Mammography is a tool that is used to screen for breast cancer. The black-and-white images that are taken appear in seconds on a computer screen for review. Mammography is our best resource for early detection of breast cancer and to lower the risk of breast cancer deaths.

During the mammogram your breast tissue will need to be spread out to obtain clear images, to obtain these images the breast will be compressed between two firm surfaces. At this point the images are taken and sent to a radiologist for examination.

Early Detection is on Your Side

Every day we learn more about breast cancer and how to win the battle. One fact is very clear ? the distinct advantage is early detection. Fortunately, breast cancer is highly detectable through digital mammography screening. If breast cancer is detected early, before it spreads, 98 percent of the women will be alive five years later. The earlier it's discovered, the earlier it's treated, the better your chance of survival.

Mammograms are used as a screening tool, as well as, a diagnostic tool.

Screening Mammograms are used to examine any changes within the breast that may not be clinically apparent. Usually this examination requires at least two images from different angles of each breast.

Screening Mammograms are vital to breast health, since the early detection can show changes within the breast up to two years prior to when a patient or physician can feel them.

Diagnostic Mammograms are used to investigate clinically noticeable changes in the breast, such as breast lump, breast pain, a change in skin appearance, thickening or discharge of the nipple.

When Should You Have a Mammogram?

In general if you are 40 and over, you should have a mammogram every year to check for abnormalities or lumps that may indicate early stages of breast cancer. Women with personal or family histories of breast cancer should consult their doctor about the need for more frequent or earlier mammography. However, mammograms do not replace breast self-exams. Although mammograms can see cancerous lesions earlier than you can feel them with a self-exam, it is still important to examine your breasts every month.

For a calculation of your lifetime breast cancer risk, visit www.cancer.gov/bcrisktool.

How to Prepare for Your Mammogram

If you are pre-menopausal, schedule your mammogram shortly after the end of your period to ease any tenderness or discomfort.

It is best not to wear deodorant, antiperspirants, lotions, creams or powder under your arms or near or around your breast the day of your exam since it could affect the images. Also, wear a two-piece outfit because you'll need to undress from the waist up.

If you are going to a new facility, please gather prior mammograms and either have them sent over prior to your appointment or bring them with you. Comparison images are helpful if you any have been obtained before.

What to Expect

You will be asked to stand in front of the mammography unit. The technician will place one breast on the platform and help the positioning of your head, arms and torso to obtain clear views of your breast. The breast will then be compressed by a paddle, made of plastic, to distribute the breast tissue evenly for clear visualization. If there is too much discomfort, let your technician know.

You will be asked to change positions, with the help of your technician, for alternate views. This entire process normally takes about 30 minutes.

Learn More

American Cancer Society ? www.cancer.org

Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation ? www.komen.org

American Breast Cancer Foundation ? www.abcf.org

National Breast Cancer Coalition ? <http://www.natlbcc.org> & www.breastcancer.org

Information provided by GE Healthcare, www.gehealthcare.com, The Mayo Clinic,

www.mayoclinic.com, **and Radiology Info**, www.radiologyinfo.org.