

MAMMOGRAPHY: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

What exactly is a mammogram?

A mammogram is a tool used to screen for breast cancer. Each breast is compressed between two plates as small amounts of radiation take an internal picture (X-ray) of the breast. A radiologist then looks at these pictures and can find signs of potential cancer.

Will it hurt during the procedure?

The procedure may hurt your breasts, but the technician needs to squeeze the breast to get an accurate picture. The pain should not be unbearable only a little uncomfortable. Your breasts may be sore after the procedure, but the pain will subside shortly. It may help to take a pain relief medication before getting a mammogram. It is also good to schedule your mammogram after your period because the breasts are generally less sensitive.

How accurate is a mammogram?

Mammograms are generally very accurate they can detect 80-90% of breast cancers in women without symptoms and when combined with a clinical breast exam and diligent self breast examination, the chances of a cancer going undetected are very low.

Where do I get a mammogram?

There are many places to get mammograms, breast clinics, radiology departments, some doctor's offices, and there are often mobile mammogram vans that offer the procedure. The MQSA is the Mammography Quality Standards Act, a Federal law that helps to ensure the safety and reliability of mammograms across the country. You should visit a facility accredited by the FDA. You can visit the FDA to verify that your local facility is accredited at https://acsremindme.com/hma/modify_subscription.php?CID=288.

How much does a mammogram usually cost?

Mammograms usually cost between \$50 and \$150 and in many cases insurance companies will pay most or all of the cost. **There are also many low-cost or free programs around the country.** Visit www.komen.org or call 1-800- I'M-AWARE ® (1-800-462-9237) to find a low-cost or free mammogram facility near you.

What if the mammogram shows something wrong?

More comprehensive tests will be done. Possibly an ultrasound, a biopsy, MRI, or a more intensive diagnostic mammography will be done to determine more comprehensive results.

What should I wear the day of the exam?

It is not a good idea to wear deodorant, perfume, lotion, or any other cosmetic product the day of the mammogram. These products can distort the mammogram giving a false negative or false positive. Also, you will be asked to undress from the waist up, so it's best not to wear a dress.

Do I need a referral to get a mammogram at a mammography facility?

In general no. There are many facilities that allow self referral; call ahead to make sure your facility accepts them. You can receive all the information about the mammography you need using a self referral.

Should I still get a mammogram if I'm pregnant?

Because the effects of radiation on the fetus are not known, in general doctors do not suggest a mammography for pregnant woman. If there is any need for concern other imaging tests will be done, such as an ultrasound. Women who are pregnant should be diligent about doing breast exams themselves

Will a mammogram affect breast feeding?

A mammogram will not have any effect on breast feeding, but the results may not be as accurate. So, women breast feeding should be diligent in doing their self breast exams.

If I have breast implants can I get a mammogram?

Yes you can get a mammogram with breast implants, but you need to tell the technicians beforehand. Some facilities may not have a technician able to perform the mammogram correctly, so ask ahead of time.

What's a false negative result?

A false negative is when a mammogram is read as 'negative' (i.e. no cancer) but the person being tested does have cancer.

What is a false positive result?

A false positive is when a mammogram is mistakenly interpreted as detecting cancer when the person being tested does NOT have cancer.

How often should I get a mammogram?

You should do a BSE every month if you are over the age of 20 and it's a good idea to have a complete breast exam every 3 years as well. If you are over 40 years old then you should get a mammogram every year. If you have significant risk factors you should get a mammogram yearly no matter what age you are. Sign up for a mammography email reminder from the American Cancer Society (https://acsremindme.com/hma/modify_subscription.php?CID=288).

Why do I need to get a mammogram every year?

It is important to get a mammogram every year if you are over 40 because it is easier to detect changes in the breast if the radiologist has a picture every year to compare. A breast lump needs to be about the size of a quarter before a woman can feel it herself, a mammogram can detect a lump smaller than a pencil eraser.

What is a BSE?

BSE stands for Breast Self-Exam. It is an exam that should be done monthly by all women over the age of 20. It can detect breast lumps about the size of a quarter and it is a great screening tool that can help in early detection of breast cancer. To find out how to do a BSE call 1800 I'M AWARE ® (1-800-462-9237) or go to <http://cms.komen.org/Komen/AboutBreastCancer/EarlyDetectBSEMain>.

Can a mammogram CAUSE cancer?

No women have been shown to have developed breast cancer as a result of mammography (1). The American Cancer Society reports that a woman receiving treatment for breast cancer would receive several thousand rads, whereas a woman getting a mammogram every year from

age 40 to 90 would receive only around 10 rads. The breast is being exposed to radiation which can cause cancer, but the chances of getting cancer from mammograms do not outweigh the benefit of early detection.

Can I get an ultrasound instead of a mammogram?

An ultrasound is usually only used when the results of a mammogram show more accurate testing is needed or if there are significant symptoms present. If there are no lumps or other symptoms a mammogram is enough to stay ahead of breast cancer.

What is the smallest size tumor that a mammogram can detect?

A mammogram can detect tumors at very early stages, when they are around the size of a pencil eraser. At this point the tumors are still very small and usually readily treated. Importantly, mammograms are able to identify cancers that are not detectable via breast self exam (BSE).

Why do I need to get a mammogram if I can do my own breast exam?

A mammogram can detect cancerous tissue on the microscopic level, whereas you cannot feel a microscopic lump doing a BSE. For example, the average size of a lump found by BSE is about the size of a quarter (~2.5 cm) and the average size lump found by first mammogram is about the size of a dime (~1.5 cm). This is a significant difference in size.

How old is too old to get a mammogram?

There is no too old to get a mammogram, in fact the chances of getting breast cancer increase as you get older. So, getting a mammogram every year after you turn 40 is your best bet to prevent breast cancer, even when you're 100.

I'm a man, should I get a mammogram?

Men DO get cancer. Men can get mammograms and definitely should if they have risk factors associated with male breast cancer or have any physical symptoms (lumps, pain, discharge, etc.).

What if I'm physically disabled, can I get a mammogram?

Women with disabilities don't get mammograms as often as women without disabilities. This should not be the case. Women with disabilities should call the mammogram facility before hand to determine if they are capable of accommodating disabled women. If the center is not capable, call other certified mammography centers until you find one. Remember, you're disability should NOT prevent you from getting a mammogram!