

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. It is a breast cancer screening tool. It can find breast cancer in a person who does not have any signs.

Overall, it is the best screening tool we have today to find breast cancer early in most women. It can find breast cancer when it's very small, even too small to feel. It can also detect calcifications as well as abnormal changes to the skin.

A mammogram can also be used as a follow-up test when a problem is found on a screening mammogram or clinical breast exam. This is called a diagnostic mammogram.

Regular breast cancer screening (along with follow-up tests and treatment if diagnosed) reduces your chance of dying from breast cancer.

Approximate size of tumors found on a screening mammogram (compared to U.S. coins)

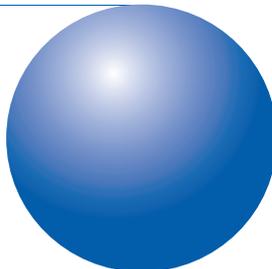
Average-size lump found by yearly mammogram when past images can be compared.



Average-size lump found by first mammogram.



Average-size lump found by accident.



What to expect on the day of the exam

On the day of the exam, wear a shirt you can remove easily. Do not use deodorant, perfume, powder or lotion under your arms or breasts. Ingredients in these products can show up on a mammogram and make it hard to read. Getting a screening mammogram takes about 15 minutes.

During the exam, each breast is pressed between two plates and an X-ray image is made. Two views of each breast are taken, one from the top and the other from the side.

You should get your results within two weeks. If you don't, call your doctor.

Screening and diagnostic mammograms are about the same. There may be more views taken with a diagnostic mammogram, though.

Questions & answers about mammography

Are mammograms painful?

Getting a mammogram shouldn't hurt. You may feel some pressure but it only lasts a few seconds.

Is the radiation harmful?

Being exposed to a small amount of radiation during a mammogram can increase the risk of breast cancer over time, but this increase in risk is very small. Studies show that the benefits of mammography outweigh the risks.

Should I get a mammogram?

Talk with your doctor about when and how often to get a mammogram.

What if I cannot afford a mammogram?

The Affordable Care Act requires all new health insurance plans to cover mammography for women ages 40 and older. This includes Medicare and Medicaid. Call our breast care helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) for information about low cost programs that may be in your area.

1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) www.komen.org

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