



10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MAMMOGRAMS

Mammograms can save your life. Finding breast cancer early reduces your risk of dying from the disease by 25-30% or more. Women should begin having mammograms yearly at age 40, or earlier if they're at high risk.

Don't be afraid. Mammography is a fast procedure (about 20 minutes), and discomfort is minimal for most women. The procedure is safe: there's only a very tiny amount of radiation exposure from a mammogram. To relieve the anxiety of waiting for results, try to go to a center that will give you results before you leave.

Get the best quality you can. If you have dense breasts or are under age 50, try to get a digital mammogram. A digital mammogram is recorded onto a computer so that doctors can enlarge certain sections to look at them more closely.

Bring your past mammogram films/results with you. If you've been to the same facility before, make sure your past results are available to whomever will be looking at your new results.

Be loyal. Once you find a facility you have confidence in, try to go there every year so that your mammograms can be compared from year to year.

Ask if your center has CAD — computer-aided detection — which is a tool that helps the radiologist find any areas of concern that need further attention.

Don't wear deodorant or antiperspirant to your mammogram since these can show up on the film and interfere with the test results.

Mammography is our most powerful breast cancer detection tool. However, mammograms can still miss 20% of breast cancers that are simply not visible using this technique. Other important tools — such as breast self-exam, clinical breast examination, and possibly ultrasound or MRI — can and should be used as complements, but there are no substitutes or replacements for a mammogram.

An unusual result requiring further testing does not always mean you have breast cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, about 10% of women (1 in 10) who have a mammogram will require more tests. Only 8-10% of these women will need a biopsy, and about 80% of these biopsies will turn out not to be cancer.

Women should get a mammogram once a year beginning at age 40. If you're at high risk of breast cancer, have a strong family history of breast or ovarian cancer, or have had radiation treatment to the chest in the past, it's recommended that you start having annual mammograms at a younger age (often beginning around age 30). Discuss your personalized screening plan with your healthcare provider.

To learn more about mammograms and the importance of screening, visit [Breastcancer.org](https://www.breastcancer.org).