

Woman's Guide to Mammography



Introduction: What is cancer?

There are many types of cancer. All types of cancer cause cells in the body to change and grow out of control. Most types of cancer cells form a lump called a tumor. Cells from the tumor can break away and travel to other parts of the body. There they can continue to grow. Not all lumps are cancers. A lump that is not a cancer is not a threat to life. The word for a cancerous lump is “malignant.”

What is early detection of cancer?

To find cancer early, healthy people should have some medical tests even if they do not have any symptoms of a disease. A mammogram will find a tumor even if a woman has no symptoms of breast cancer.

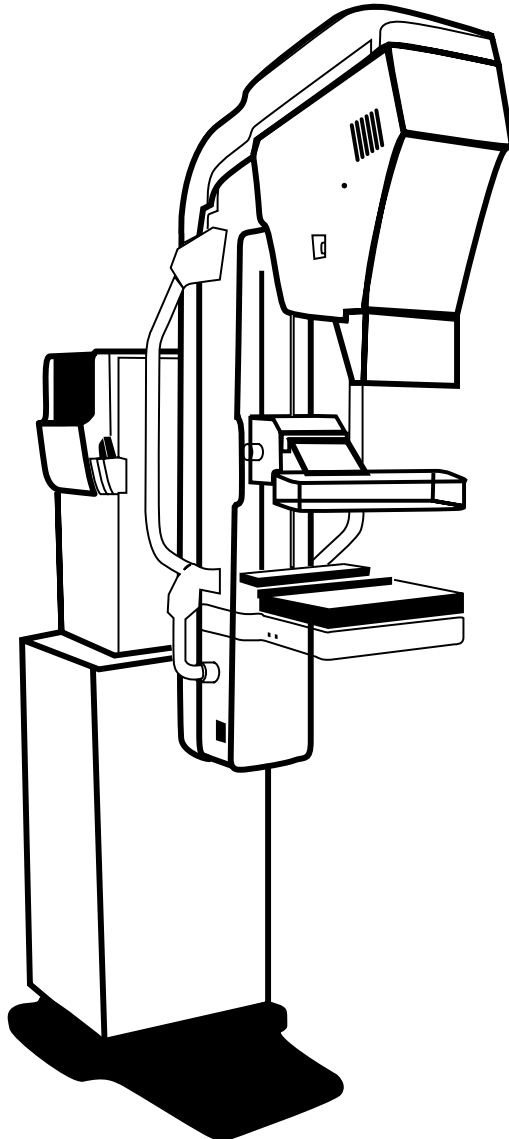
Some women are at a higher risk for breast cancer and may need to have tests more often. There are some guidelines to find breast cancer. Talk to your nurse or doctor to find out what is best for you. Your age is a guide to decide how often you need tests.

The American Cancer Society says that you need to have a mammogram every year if you are age 40 and older.

What is a mammogram?

It is an x-ray of the breast which uses a very small amount of radiation. When you get a mammogram, you stand beside a machine, and a specially trained person helps you put your breast in place for the picture. Your breast is put between two plastic plates. The plates make your breast flatter so an x-ray can be taken. You should also have a breast exam by a doctor or a nurse.

Picture of a mammogram machine:



WHAT IS IT LIKE TO GET A MAMMOGRAM?

- ***Are x-rays safe?***

Over the past 20 years mammography has improved a great deal. Today the level of radiation is very low and not harmful.

- ***Does it hurt?***

The machine must press the breast to get a good picture. Some women think it is a “tight squeeze” and may be slightly uncomfortable, but it lasts less than “30 seconds.”

- ***Is it embarrassing?***

Not at all. You stand beside the machine, and a trained nurse helps put your breast on a plastic plate. A second piece of plastic is placed on top and for a few seconds, the breast is flattened a bit to get a clear picture.

- ***Is it expensive?***

A mammogram can cost from about \$50 to \$250. Your health insurance may cover this. Check it out. If cost is a concern, low cost and free mammograms are available. Medicare pays for a mammogram every other year for women 65 years and older. The American Cancer Society can give you information about free and low-cost mammograms. Call 1-800-ACS-2345.

- ***Where can I get a mammogram?***

If you have a doctor, ask him or her where you can get a mammogram. Many public health departments, hospitals, and women's clinics offer mammograms. To get help in finding a place to get a quality mammogram, call Your American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.

- ***What happens if I find breast cancer?***

Most lumps are not cancer, so your doctor will do a test to see if the lump is cancer or not. If it is cancer, your doctor will talk to you about how to treat it. Remember that if breast cancer is found early the woman has more cancer treatment options. The American Cancer Society can give you more information and can also put you in touch with the other women who have had breast cancer. Call 1-800-ACS-2345.

Why is it important for me to get a Mammogram?

- √ Finding breast cancer early can save your life.
- √ As you get older, your risk of breast cancer increases. More than half of all breast cancer occur in women over 50.
- √ Most women with breast cancer have no history of it in their family.
- √ Early detection often means less surgery.
- √ Getting a mammogram is easier than you think.
- √ Having a mammogram once a year helps give you peace of mind.

**You should begin to get yearly mammograms
by the time you are 40.**

Finding breast cancer early can save your life!

GLOSSARY

cells - the smallest division of our body

cure - to remove a disease by treatment

detection - to discover a disease

diagnosis - to find the cause by studying the symptoms

guideline - recommendation for having a specific test

medical - connected with medicine or doctors

prevention - to keep a disease from occurring

radiation - to emit rays from a point or surface, as heat or light

symptoms - any evidence of a disease

Original Text by:

Niccu Tafarrodi, Ph.D.

Donald Whipple Fox

Original Text Edited by:

Katherine Levin, Ph.D.

Katherine is a native of St. Paul, Minnesota. Her field of expertise is writing and editing cancer prevention literature targeted at ethnic, immigrant, and underserved English-speaking communities.

Original Text Simplified by:

Rosemarie J. Park, Ph.D.

Rosemarie is a native of the United Kingdom. She is an Associate Professor at the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. Her area of work is in adult literacy and English language.

Illustrations by:

Nickdokht Torkzadeh

Nickdokht is a native of Tehran, Iran. She is a Graphic Designer at the University of Minnesota where she earned her MA from the School of Architecture. Her field of work is design, layout and graphics for print and interactive media.

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MAMMOGRAPHY
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