

Mammography



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 symptoms.

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.

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

A diagnostic mammogram cannot diagnose breast cancer. If the findings look like breast cancer, you will have a biopsy to diagnose (or rule out) breast cancer.

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

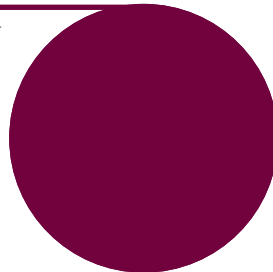
Average-size tumor found by yearly mammogram when past images can be compared.



Average-size tumor found by first mammogram.



Average-size tumor found by accident.



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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 on your breasts. These products can show up on a mammogram and make it hard to read.

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.

Questions & answers about mammography

When should I get a mammogram?

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

Are mammograms painful?

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

Is radiation used in mammography 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.

What if I cannot afford a mammogram?

The Affordable Care Act requires all new health insurance plans to cover annual screening 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 in your area.

Sign up for your screening reminder at [komen.org/reminders](https://www.komen.org/reminders)!

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

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