



BASIC INFORMATION

DEFINITION

• Mammography is a procedure that involves taking x-rays of the breasts to detect breast cysts or tumors, especially those that cannot be felt (palpable) by the fingers during a physical examination. A mammogram is the photographic result. Mammograms can show if the inside of the breast looks normal or if there are abnormalities. Further testing is needed for a definite diagnosis of cancer.

• Your health care provider will advise you about getting mammograms. Routine mammograms are generally recommended for the following age groups:

Around the age of 40 years, all women should have their first mammogram.

Between ages 40 and 50 years, women should have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years.

After age 50 years, all women should have a mammogram every year.

Women at high risk for breast cancer (anyone with a close relative who has had breast cancer) should have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years beginning at age 35 years.

REASONS FOR PROCEDURE

- Evaluate breast symptoms such as lumps, persistent pain, nipple discharge.
- Screen for breast cancer.
- Helps differentiate between noncancerous breast disease and breast cancer.

RISK

None expected.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE

• You usually need to go to a special clinic to get a mammogram. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) inspects and certifies all places in the United States where mammograms are done.

• All clothing above the waist is removed and a gown provided that opens in the front.

• You will stand in front of the x-ray equipment.

• Each breast in turn will be compressed between 2 plastic plates in 2 or more positions for the x-rays. Compressing the breasts can be uncomfortable, but it minimizes the amount of radiation required to get a clear image.

• After the films are taken, they are checked to make sure they are readable. If not, the procedure will be repeated.

• Newer digital mammography is used for both screening and diagnosis. With standard mammography, images are recorded on film using an x-ray cassette. The film is viewed by the radiologist. With digital mammography, the breast image is captured using a special electronic x-ray detector, which converts the image into a digital picture for review on a computer monitor. The magnification, orientation, brightness, and contrast of the image may be altered after

the exam is completed to help the radiologist more clearly see certain areas. For the patient, the procedure is the same as with ordinary mammography. In comparison studies to date, there has been no significant differences between the two methods in detecting cancerous growths. Studies will be ongoing to determine if diagnostic accuracy is improved with digital mammograms.

• An ImageChecker may be used to scan the image and mark any suspicious areas on it. The radiologist then reviews the scan as an extra step in the screening.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

• There are normally no physical side effects from the test itself.

• As a screening test, results usually reveal normal breast tissue with no abnormal masses or calcification.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Misdiagnosis; missing cancers that are there or mistaking benign lumps for cancerous ones.



POSTPROCEDURE CARE

GENERAL MEASURES

• No special self-care measures are needed after the test.

• If you have a mammogram that doesn't look normal, a biopsy (a tissue sample of the breast) may be recommended. A biopsy is minor surgery. The breast tissue from a biopsy is tested in a laboratory to see if it's cancerous. Just because a problem area shows up on your mammogram, it doesn't mean that you have cancer. Cancer can only be diagnosed by a lab test on tissue from your breast.

• Further testing may be recommended even if the mammogram results are negative, such as when there is an undiagnosed abnormality on physical examination or unexplained symptoms occur.

• Follow-up treatment steps will depend on the specific diagnosis.

• Additional information available from American Cancer Society at (800) ACS-2345; website cancer.org; or the National Cancer Institute at (800) 4-CANCER; website www.nci.nih.gov.

MEDICATION

Medicine is not necessary for the procedure itself.

ACTIVITY

No restrictions.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You have not had a mammogram as recommended.