

Mammography

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is performed using a special x-ray machine that looks for changes in breast tissue. There are two types, screening or diagnostic.

Why is a mammogram performed?

Screenings are done to look for breast cancer when you have no breast symptoms or problems. Diagnostic mammograms include extra images and are done if there are breast symptoms or there is a change on a screening mammogram. Mammograms can't prove that an abnormal area is cancer, but helps determine if more testing is necessary.

How do I prepare for a mammogram?

Try to schedule your mammogram when your breasts are not tender or swollen to help reduce discomfort and get good pictures. Try to avoid the week just before your period.

It is important to bring any prior outside comparison mammogram images with you to your appointment or have the prior images sent to our facility prior to your appointment. Having all your images available for comparison will help the radiologist determine if there have been any changes to the breast tissue. There may be a delay in your results if prior images are not available at the time of the appointment.

On the day of the exam, don't wear perfume, powder, lotion, deodorant or antiperspirant above the waist, in the underarm or in the breast area. Some of these contain substances that can show up on the x-ray as white spots.

You will need to remove your top and bra for the mammogram, so it may be helpful to wear separate bottoms so only your top will need to be removed.

What should I expect during a mammogram?

You'll have to undress above the waist to get a mammogram and will be provided with a gown to wrap around your top half.

A technologist will position your breasts for the mammogram. To get a high-quality picture, your breast must be flattened. The technologist places your breast on the machine's plate. The plastic upper plate is lowered to compress your breast for a few seconds while the technologist takes a picture.

You might feel some discomfort when your breasts are compressed. Two views of each breast are taken for a screening mammogram. But for some women, such as those with breast implants or large breasts, more pictures may be needed. More pictures are taken during a diagnostic mammogram with a focus on the area that looked different on the screening mammogram.

How long does a mammogram take?

The whole procedure takes about 20 minutes. The actual breast compression only lasts a few seconds.

How will my results be communicated?

After the radiologist has reviewed and interpreted your images, a report will be sent to the ordering physician. Your physician will compare to the last mammogram if possible, and explain the meaning of your test results with you and next steps for your treatment and care plan.

How can I get a copy of my results?

Imaging results can be downloaded onto a CD for you to keep or share with other physicians. At times, electronic medical records allow other physicians to view the images if they have the same electronic system. Please allow 24 hours for film requests. Contact the imaging department for all film requests 540-785-7200. Films can be picked up at requested location. Charges may apply when requesting personal records.

Additional considerations:

It is not recommended to bring children under the age of 14 to your appointment unless accompanied by another responsible adult.

If appointments must be cancelled, please give us 24 hours' notice. If this is not possible, notify the office ASAP that you are not able to keep the appointment.

Please arrive 10-15 mins prior to appointment to allow time for the check-in process and appropriate questionnaires to be completed.