

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is a distinct type of medical imaging of the breasts that uses low dose x-rays to reveal tumours before they become large enough for you to feel.

Why do I need to have this procedure?

Your physician has probably asked to you to have a mammogram because you may be at high risk of or have the symptoms of breast cancer. Some of these symptoms include a lump, nipple discharge, and breast pain. A mammography might also be performed to further evaluate an abnormal finding in the breast.

Mammograms are crucial in the detection of cancer in women above the age of 40 and current international guidelines suggest a screening mammogram should be performed yearly.

How can I prepare for the procedure?

You should not apply any deodorant, lotion, or talcum powder under your arms or on your breasts on the day of the procedure as they can appear as calcium spots on the mammogram.

You will be given a gown to wear during the procedure.

Remove all metal objects such as jewellery, eyeglasses, dentures and hairpins. These objects can affect medical images and should

be removed prior to your exam.

Bring all previous mammograms with you so that your physician can compare them with your current exam.

Women should always let their physician or technologist if there is a possibility that they are pregnant because the x-rays can harm your baby.

How is the procedure performed?

You will be positioned on the mammography unit. Depending on the type of machine, you will either be sitting or standing.

One breast at a time will be placed on a special x-ray plate and a device known as a compressor will be pressed against your breast to help level the breast tissue so that any small abnormalities do not remain hidden. This process is also necessary to hold the breast firm and eliminate blurring of the image.

Your technologist will stand behind a glass shield during the procedure. A top-to-bottom image and side view image will be taken from both breasts.

Once this is completed, your technologist will ask you to wait until the radiologist, a physician trained to use medical imaging to diagnose and treat diseases, determines that you do not need to take an additional angle or have an ultrasound.

The entire process is usually completed within 30 minutes.

What will I experience during and after the procedure?

You will feel pressure on your breast as it is squeezed by the compressor. Women with sensitive breasts may experience additional discomfort and should schedule the mammogram when their breasts are the least tender.

You should immediately inform the technologists if you experience any pain as the pressure on the breast is increased.

Who interprets my results and how do I get them?

A radiologist will analyse your results and send a signed report to your primary care or referring physician, who will share the results with you.

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GETTING A MAMMOGRAM

