

mammography

What is a mammogram? _

A mammogram is an X-ray picture of the breast. A mammogram can find cancer when it is still small and easier to treat. Health and medical experts recommend that all women get a mammogram on a regular basis — every year for women age 40 and over (and perhaps earlier if you have a family history of breast cancer). It is also important to follow the screening guidelines for clinical breast exams and breast self-exams (BSE). If you have a breast problem, a mammogram can also be used to help diagnose it. Mammograms are very accurate, but they are not perfect. They can find a lump much smaller than you

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Cancer appears on a mammogram as a white spot. This is what a normal mammogram looks like. or your doctor can feel. But sometimes they can miss cancer. That is why it is important to keep checking your breasts by getting clinical breast exams and doing monthly breast self-exams in addition to having mammograms.

How to get a mammogram in six easy steps

Pick a good time.

A mammogram may be uncomfortable if you have sensitive breasts. If you are still menstruating, plan to have your mammogram the week after your period, when your breasts are less tender.

Gather your information.

When you make your appointment, you will be asked about:

- any personal history of breast cancer
- any family history of breast cancer
- any current breast problems
- any past breast surgery
- the date(s) of your past mammogram(s)
- the name and address of your doctor and any facility where you've had a mammogram before

During your visit, be sure you ask about:

- how and when you will get the results
- when you need to come back

Know what to expect.

You will stand in front of a special machine. The technologist will place your breast on a platform for pictures in at least two views. She will use a clear plastic plate to press your

breast while the pictures are taken. This will not harm your breast. In fact, flattening it reduces the amount of X-rays needed. Although it may be uncomfortable, it should not hurt. Be sure to tell the technologist if the pressure becomes painful.

Come prepared.

Wear a shirt that you can take off easily. Don't use deodorant, talcum powder or lotion on your underarms or breasts. If you have had a mammogram before at a different facility, obtain and bring your past X-rays with you.

Get your results.

If your mammogram shows anything unusual, talk with your doctor about what to do next.