



Mammograms: the Power of Early Detection

Among women the United States, breast cancer is the most common cancer, other than skin cancer, and the second leading cause of cancer death, according to the American Cancer Society. Last year, 192,370 people were diagnosed with invasive breast cancer and 40,170 died from the disease. Fortunately, breast cancer rates are declining most likely due to earlier detection and improved treatment. Currently, there are more than 2 1/2 million breast cancer survivors in this country.

What is a Mammogram? *Breast Cancer Screening Guidelines*

Finding breast cancer early and before it has caused symptoms increases the likelihood that treatment will be successful. One way to find breast cancer early is through a mammogram, an x-ray of the breast. There are two types of mammograms: screening and diagnostic. Screening mammograms are designed to search for breast disease in women who do not have symptoms, while diagnostic mammograms are intended to diagnose disease in women who are experiencing symptoms.

During a mammogram, a technologist positions the breast between two plates. The plates compress the breast, which spreads the breast tissue. The compression lasts for several seconds and can cause discomfort; however, it is necessary to create a clear and readable image. Mammograms generally take approximately 20 minutes, and results are available within 30 days. The American Cancer Society reports that only two to four of every 1,000 mammograms lead to a diagnosis of cancer.

Breast cancer screening recommendations vary from woman to woman, based on age, and family and personal history. The American Cancer Society's makes the following recommendations for early detection of breast cancer.

- Women age 40 and older should have a screening mammogram every year for as long as they are in good health. Because mammograms do not detect every cancer, women age 40 and older are advised to have a clinical breast exam (by a health professional) every year.
- Women ages 20-39 are advised to have a clinical breast exam every three years.
- Women should know how their breasts normally look and feel and report any changes to a health professional right away.
- Breast self-exam (BSE) is an option for women starting in their 20s. Women should be told about the benefits and limits of BSE.
- Some women should be screened with an MRI in addition to mammograms. Talk with your doctor about your history and whether you should have additional tests at an earlier age.

To discuss additional prevention tools or to determine your risk factors for breast cancer, consult your physician.



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MAKE TIME for a Mammogram

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According to the American Cancer Society, death rates from breast cancer have declined significantly in recent years, most likely due to earlier detection and treatment of the disease. One way breast cancer can be caught early is with a mammogram. The first sign of cancer is often an abnormality that shows up on a mammogram before any change in the breast can be felt by the woman or her doctor.



For more information or to make an appointment for a mammogram, call the Breast Health Center at (803) 395-2841. Breast Health Center hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.