

Mammograms: What You Should Know

Mammograms, or low-dose x-rays of the breasts, are a safe and effective first step in helping to detect breast cancer. There are two classifications of mammograms:

- **Screening mammograms** do not require a prescription. If you do not have any current breast problems, screening is recommended even if you have a personal or family history of breast cancer, benign breast disease, pain, or breast implants. Women can schedule theirs by calling **1-800-649-4077**.
- **Diagnostic mammograms** are performed when there are problems such as a lump, nipple discharge, nipple inversion, a change in skin color/texture, or a change in the size/shape of the breast.

Good breast health begins with breast self-awareness. It is important that you become familiar with your breasts and report any changes, such as lumps, rashes, discharge, or pain to your health care provider so he or she can evaluate further.

UPMC Hillman Cancer Center and UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital suggest the following breast cancer screening guidelines for women with **an average risk and no symptoms**:

Screening Recommendations*	When
Visit your doctor for a clinical breast examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every three years between ages 20 to 39 • Annually, beginning at age 40
Have a screening mammogram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, beginning at age 40

* If you are at higher risk for breast cancer, you may be advised to have an annual mammogram starting at age 30. Talk to your doctor about your risk and what is best for you.

Mammogram FAQs:

- **I'm 40 years old and regularly check my breasts for lumps and changes. They feel fine. Do I still need a mammogram?**
Yes - mammography produces high-quality images of the breast. It can show cancer that may be too small for you or your doctor to feel.
- **I've heard a lot about tomosynthesis. What is it, and how does it differ from a routine screening or a diagnostic mammogram?**
Tomosynthesis is 3D mammography, which takes three-dimensional images from different angles. It is more sensitive in detecting invasive cancers that regular mammography may miss. It reduces the chances of screening patients having to come back for additional imaging, and it improves the accuracy of the mammogram in some diagnostic patients.
- **Does a mammogram hurt?**
While not comfortable for some women, mammograms should not be painful. If you are experiencing any pain during your mammogram, please let the technologist know as soon as possible.
- **How long does it take?**
Typically, a screening mammogram appointment only takes about 20 minutes. A diagnostic mammogram will take longer because more imaging is needed.
- **I'm so busy with work and my family, and I live outside of the city. Do you have imaging locations close to me?**
Yes - you do not have to travel into the city. You can schedule a mammogram at any of our Magee-Womens Imaging locations or Womancare Centers by calling **1-800-649-4077**.