

What is a Mammogram?

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. Mammography is the best screening tool we have today to find breast cancer early, when the chances of survival are highest. It can find breast cancer when it is very small, even too small to feel. It can also detect calcifications as well as abnormal changes to the skin. Mammography does a good job of finding breast cancer for most women. However, it is most accurate when used with another screening test called clinical breast exam.

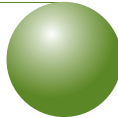
Approximate Size of Tumors Found by Mammography

Compared to Commonly Used Coins

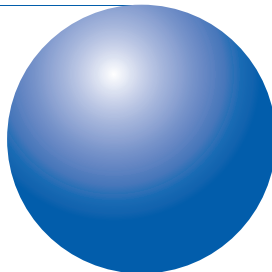
Average-size lump found by yearly mammogram when past images can be compared.



Average-size lump found by first mammogram.



Average-size lump found by accident.



Questions & Answers about Mammography

Are mammograms painful?

To get a good image, the technologist needs to flatten the breast. You may feel some pressure, but it only lasts a few seconds. It shouldn't hurt. Let the technologist know if you feel any pain.

Is the radiation harmful?

A woman is exposed to a small amount of radiation during a mammogram. While being exposed to radiation can increase the risk of breast cancer over time, this increase in risk is very small. Studies show that the benefits of mammography outweigh the risks.

How can I get a mammogram?

Call your doctor for a referral.

What if I cannot afford a mammogram?

Most insurance plans, including Medicare, cover the cost of mammograms. However, if you cannot afford one or do not have insurance, call our breast care helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) for free or low cost options in your area.

Breast self-awareness messages:

- Talk to your family to learn about your family health history
- Talk to your doctor about your personal risk of breast cancer
- Talk with your doctor about which screening tests are right for you if you are at a higher risk
- Have a mammogram every year starting at age 40 if you are at average risk
- Have a clinical breast exam at least every 3 years starting at age 20, and every year starting at age 40
- Sign up for your screening reminder at komen.org/reminder
- Know how your breasts look and feel and report any changes to your health care provider
- Make healthy lifestyle choices that may reduce your risk of breast cancer

1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) www.komen.org