

# MAMMOGRAPHY

Mammography is a process using low- energy x-rays to examine the human breast for diagnostic and screening. The goal for mammography is the early detection of breast cancer, typically through detection of characteristic masses or calcifications.

## Why is it done?

Mammography is x-ray imaging of your breast designed to detect tumors or other abnormalities. Mammography can be either for screening or diagnostic purposes in evaluating a breast lump.

- **Screening mammography (2D or 3D):** is used to detect breast changes in women who have no signs or symptoms or new abnormalities. The goal is to detect cancer before clinical signs are noticeable.
- **Diagnostic mammography (2D or 3D):** used to investigate suspicious breast changes, such as a new lump, breast pain, an unusual skin appearance, nipple thickening or nipple discharge. It is also used to evaluate changes or abnormal findings on screening mammogram. A diagnostic imaging includes additional mammogram images.

## Who should get a mammogram?

Mammogram screening is the recommended first step in breast cancer screening for all women aged 40 years and older except those who are pregnant. In pregnant women, imaging is usually done only for diagnostic purposes, when symptoms are present, and ultrasound is usually the first imaging test performed. Some women at the high risk may start screening with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) by age 25 and mammographic screening by age 30.

## How to prepare:

- Follow your normal routine- it is acceptable to eat, drink and take your normal medications.
- If you are breastfeeding, pregnant or think you may be pregnant, tell your healthcare provider, as your mammogram may need to be postponed or rescheduled for a later time.
- Please do not bring valuables to your appointment.
- Do not wear deodorant, body powder, or lotion/cream the day of your mammogram, as these substances can look abnormal on a mammogram.

- When you arrive, you will be asked to complete a breast history sheet.
- You will also be asked to remove your clothing from the waist up and will be given a mammo cape. To make it easier, wear a two piece outfit that day.
- The mammogram is performed by a registered mammography technologist, and the mammogram is interpreted (read) by a board-certified radiologist (a physician who specializes in reading x-rays).

### **What to expect during the test:**

- The technologist will review your history with you to see if you are having a problems or concerns with your breast.
- You will have you stand in front of the mammogram unit. The technologist will place one of your breast on a platform and raises or lowers the platform to your height. The technologist will help you position your head, arms and torso to allow an unobstructed view of the breast.
- Your breast is compressed against the platform by a clear plastic plate. Pressure is applied for a few seconds to spread out the breast tissue. The pressure is not harmful, but may find it uncomfortable or even painful depending on the type of tissue you have. If you have too much discomfort, please let the technologist know so they can readjust the breast.
- Your breast tissue must be compressed to even out its thickness and permit the x-rays to penetrate through the tissue. The pressure also helps to hold the breast tissue still to decrease blurring from movement and minimizes the dose of radiation needed. During the exposure you will be asked to hold your breath.

### **What to expect after your test:**

- Depending on what type of mammogram you are having, you may be asked to wait for the radiologist to review your images. If you were not having any problems or concerns and was just having a screening mammogram, you will be able to get dressed and resume you normal activity for the day.
- Not all women, but some may have temporary skin discoloration and/or mild aching in the breast from the compression. This is mostly with women who are taking aspirin or blood thinner medications. These medications can have you bruise very easily.
- Your results will be available within a few days of the test. After you receive the results, your healthcare provider will discuss everything with you and explain the radiologist recommendations. If for any reason we need some additional images

due to seeing changes from prior mammograms, our facility and/or your provider will call you to get your scheduled.