

Title: Breast Cancer Screening: Your Guide To Health

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Abstract: Mammography has consistently been proven to be an effective and safe method of screening women 50 and older for breast cancer. However, this study found that annual screening with mammography for women in their 40's was not effective at reducing breast cancer mortality compared with women who undergo usual care with breast physical examination and breast self-examination. In general then, universal screening mammography for women in their 40's should not be mandate, but rather an informed, personal decision between the physician and patient based on individual concerns, family history and acceptable risk/benefit profiles.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

## WHO SHOULD BE SCREENED?

- All women should begin monthly breast self-exams at age 20.
- All women over age 30 should have regular breast exams by their physician.
- Some women, depending on their risk factors and personal preference, may choose to get annual mammograms at age 40.
- It is generally recommended that all women begin annual screening mammography at age 50\*.

\* Women with a family history of breast or ovarian cancer should get yearly mammograms beginning 10 years before their relative was diagnosed.

## RISK FACTORS

- ✓ Increased age. Most breast cancers are diagnosed in women over 60.
- ✓ Personal or family history of breast cancer. Some breast and ovarian cancers run in families.
- ✓ Caucasian race. White women are at increased risk.
- ✓ Drinking alcohol may increase your risk of breast cancer.
- ✓ Radiation therapy to the chest.
- ✓ Dense breast tissue.
- ✓ Being overweight after menopause may increase your breast cancer risk.
- ✓ Postmenopausal hormone replacement therapy.

## MAMMOGRAPHY

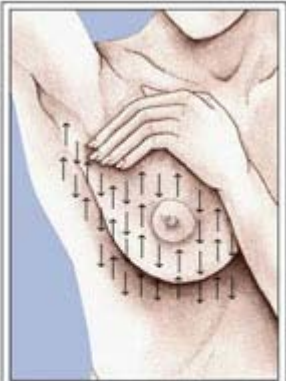
Mammograms are x-rays specially designed to look at the breast and detect differences in tissue density. They are the best way to diagnose early breast cancers, even before you feel a lump.

Mammography is recommended for all women beginning at age 50, but some women choose to begin earlier based on risk factors and family history.

During a mammogram, the breast is placed on a shelf. Then, the x-ray machine puts light pressure on the breast to spread out the breast tissue. Some women may experience mild discomfort during a mammogram. However, it is usually brief and well-tolerated.

## SELF BREAST EXAM

- Start monthly exams at age 20.
- Know what your breast normally feels like.
- Tell your physician if you notice any changes.
- Examine your breasts lying down with your arm behind your head.
- With the pads of your middle 3 fingers, use light, medium and firm pressure to feel the breast tissue.



**Breast Self Examination**  
Examine up to the collarbone,  
out to armpit, in to middle of chest,  
and down to bottom of rib cage

- Slowly examine all breast tissue using an up and down motion ( as seen in the picture).
- Repeat on the other side.
- Then while standing in front of a

mirror, look at your breasts the following three positions: arms at your side, arms behind your head, arms at your hips with your chest muscles flexed.

- If you observe any changes in size, shape, dimpling, redness, scaling or discharge of the breasts or nipples, please notify your doctor.

## RESOURCES



National Cancer Institute  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)



Breastcancer.org



Family Doctor  
[www.familydoctor.org](http://www.familydoctor.org)  
Click on breast cancer



Mayo Clinic  
[www.mayoclinic.com/health/breast-cancer/DS00328](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/breast-cancer/DS00328)



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