

Have You Had Your Mammogram?

Mammograms

Why are mammograms important?

- Mammograms can help women detect breast cancer early.
- A mammogram may find the smallest cancers before a lump can be felt.
- Early detection means more choices for treatment if you do have cancer.

Reasons Women Give for Avoiding a Mammogram

Do you or someone you know say the following about mammograms?

*"There's no breast cancer in my family."
"I don't have time." "It might hurt."*

There are many reasons why women say they do not get regular mammograms. The following are some of their reasons along with some important information for you to know.

■ "I can't afford a mammogram."

Most insurance companies cover the cost of the screening (you may have a copay).

Check with your insurance provider to see if the mammogram(s) will be covered. Your health care provider's recommendation for services does not guarantee coverage by your insurance provider.

Medicare now covers yearly mammograms. Free and low-cost mammograms are available for women with little or no insurance. Call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 for more information about these programs.

■ "No one in my family has ever had breast cancer. I don't need screening."

Being a woman and getting older are the two greatest risk factors for getting breast cancer. The majority of all breast cancers occur in women with no other risk factors.

Breast cancer risk is increased if other close members of your family (mother or sister) had breast cancer.

You have a slightly increased risk of breast cancer if you:

- had your first period before age 12
- have never given birth
- gave birth to your first child after age 35
- started menopause after age 55.

Obesity is linked to an increased risk of breast cancer.

Talk with your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns about these risk factors.

■ "My health care provider never told me to get a mammogram."

If your health care provider hasn't told you about the need for a mammogram, ask about it.

■ "I don't have time to get a mammogram."

The entire test usually takes less than 30 minutes. It's important to take the time to care for yourself and your health.

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■ **“I heard it hurts. I don’t want to go through that.”**

You may feel some brief discomfort, but it lasts less than 30 seconds. A technologist will position your breast and compress it to get a good “picture.”

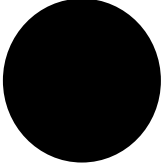

If you have sensitive breasts, try having your mammogram at a time of the month when your breasts will be least tender. For example, avoid scheduling a mammogram the week before your period. This will help lessen discomfort.

■ **“I’m better off not knowing.”**

More than 80 percent of breast lumps are not cancerous. You can gain peace of mind from taking control of your health and having regular mammograms.

You Can See the Difference a Mammogram Makes

Regular mammograms are your best way to find tumors at their smallest when treatment can be the most successful.

Average size of a lump found by women practicing occasional breast self-exams	Average size of a lump found by getting regular mammograms
	

Breast Cancer Screening Schedule for Women at Average Risk for Breast Cancer

When to start having mammograms to screen for breast cancer, and how often to have them, is a personal decision. It should be based on your preferences, your values and your risk for developing breast cancer.

Allina Health recommends that you and your health care provider together determine when mammograms are right for you.

Allina Health’s mammogram screening guidelines are based on the 2015 American Cancer Society recommendations:

- **Age 25:** Have a risk assessment for breast cancer with your health care provider.
- **Ages 40 to 44:** Should consider having a mammogram every year with your decision informed by a shared decision making process with your health care provider. During this process, they will explain the benefits and harms of screening.
- **Ages 45 to 54:** Have a mammogram every year.
- **Age 55 and older:** Have a mammogram every year or transition to having one every 2 years. Continue to have mammograms as long as your health is good.

Your doctor may recommend a different schedule if you have a **higher than average risk** for breast cancer.