

Mammography – What is it?

The best method for early detection of cancer in the breast is an x-ray examination, called mammography. While women are encouraged to regularly examine their breasts, self examination only picks up 50 percent of breast cancers whereas mammography, combined with a physical examination by your doctor, picks up over 90 percent of cancers.

All women aged 40 to 50 years should have their breasts screened annually.

All women over the age of 50 should have their breasts screened every two years.

Your Mammogram – the process

The whole visit takes about half an hour. You need to undress from the waist up. When you are comfortable, the radiographer positions one of your breasts between two plastic plates. Some compression of the breast is necessary in order to improve image quality and reduce radiation dose. The plates are removed as soon as the exposure is taken.

At Mercy Radiology we routinely take two views of the breast, but sometimes further x-rays are obtained to show an area of breast tissue more clearly. Don't worry if we take several more x-rays of your breast.

Do not use talcum powder under your arms or on your breasts on the day of the examination as it can show up on x-rays.

Mammography/Ultrasound

For most patients a mammogram is sufficient, but ultrasound may be needed to examine particularly dense breast tissue. There is no discomfort with this method of examination. It can add up to 15 minutes to the time needed for your mammogram.

Ultrasound should be used *in addition* to your mammogram, not instead of. It can be particularly useful in detecting cysts.

Your results

Sometimes it is not possible to provide the results immediately because we need to compare them with previous examination results, or we need to consult with other radiologists to best interpret the results. In any case your report will be sent to your doctor outlining our findings and recommendations for any further action. If there is a problem which requires immediate attention, we will discuss this with your doctor before you leave our clinic.

Appointments

To make an appointment for your mammogram, please phone the most convenient of our locations listed on our locations page.

If you still have some questions about mammography, ask your doctor or contact us direct.

Our staff will be pleased to help you.

