

Have You Been Screened for Breast Cancer?

Mammogram

- A mammogram is an exam that takes an X-ray picture of the breast. Doctors recommend getting a mammogram every 2 years once a woman turns 50 years old.
- Get screened before the age of 50 if you have unusual symptoms or family history of breast cancer.
- Getting this exam can help find breast cancer early, sometimes up to 3 years before a lump can be felt. This is when there is the best chance for treatment.
- Mammograms are less likely to find breast tumors in women younger than 50 years than in older women. This may be because younger women have denser breast tissue that appears white on a mammogram. Because tumors also appear white on a mammogram, they can be harder to find when there is dense breast tissue.
- The U.S Preventive Services Task Force recommends that women ages of 40-49 years should seek advice from their doctor about when and how often to get a screening mammogram.
- Women aged 40 to 74 years who have screening mammograms have a lower chance of dying from breast cancer than women who do not have screening mammograms.

What happens during a mammogram?

- During the exam, normally you and the person taking the picture are the only ones in the room.
- Your breast will be placed between two X-ray panels to flatten and spread the tissue. This lasts a few seconds and it is the best way to get a clear picture.
- The whole exam takes about 20 minutes.
- For some people, such as women with breast implants, more pictures may be needed to include as much breast tissue as possible.



Below is a list of tips for how to make a mammogram exam a good one:

- Try not to have your mammogram exam the week before your period or during your period. Your breasts may be tender or swollen then.
- Do not wear lotions, powders, perfumes or deodorant. They can show up as white spots on the X-ray picture.
- You may want to wear a skirt or pants, so that you will only need to remove your shirt for the exam.
- Take a few moments before the exam to ask any questions, raise concerns.
- Distract yourself during the exam. You can picture a pleasant scene in your mind, think of a song or something that makes you smile.
- Always tell the person doing the exam how you feel at any time during the exam.

If you have chosen to not get a mammogram done in the past because you are nervous, you are not alone.

- It can be scary to think about the exam and the test results.
- Keep in mind that only 2 to 4 of every 1,000 mammograms lead to a diagnosis of cancer.
- Many women go on to live long and healthy lives when their breast cancer is found early.

Did you know that...

- CalOptima covers the cost of mammograms.
- A mammogram is still needed even if you feel fine, have no pain or early signs of cancer.
- A mammogram is still needed even if no one in your family has had breast cancer.
- Only 5 to 10% of all women with breast cancer have a family history of it.
- Mammogram equipment used today is very safe.
- The amount of radiation you receive is small, and studies have shown that these levels are not harmful.
- Your risk of getting breast cancer is greater as you get older.
- About one in eight women born today will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime.

Have you told women you care about, like your mother, sister, daughter or friend, to get a mammogram?

- Women lead very busy lives and often spend more time caring for other people than themselves.
- It is very important to take the time to do something good for yourself as well.
- If you are 50 years old, have a family history of breast cancer or your breast feel different, schedule an appointment to talk to your Dr. about having a mammogram. It could save your life.