

FROM THE OFFICE OF DR.

# Mammography

**B**REAST CANCER is often curable if detected at an early stage. To detect breast cancer early the American Cancer Society recommends that all women have a mammogram once a year starting at age 40.

## What is a mammogram?

■ A mammogram is an x-ray picture of the breast; *mammography* is the method of examining the breast with mammograms.

Mammograms are done for two reasons:

- **As a screening test.** A mammogram can detect lumps and other changes too small to be felt by physical examination. However, a screening mammogram usually cannot reveal whether these potential abnormalities are cancer or some benign (harmless) condition.
- **As a diagnostic test.** A physician may order a more-detailed mammogram to examine a potential abnormality found during a breast self-exam, or exam by the doctor, or on a screening mammogram.

## Before the mammogram

- If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, tell your doctor.
- Eat meals as usual on the day of the mammogram. If you take any medicines, take them as usual too.
- Do not wear body powder, cream, deodorant, or lotion on your torso the day of the mammogram. These may interfere with the x-rays.

## What will happen?

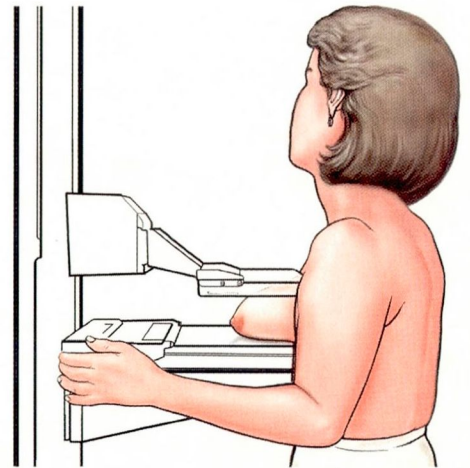
■ You will be asked to stand in front of the mammogram machine. The mammography technologist will place your breast between two paddles. The breast is then compressed for approximately 5 to 6 seconds while the mammogram is taken.

Compression is necessary to flatten the breast to get a clear picture. Your cooperation is important; however, if the compression is too intense, inform the technologist. She will do her best to work with you to get the best possible mammogram pictures. You may want to schedule your mammogram to take place 7 to 10 days after the start of your menstrual period to minimize discomfort.

## What if they find something abnormal?

■ From 6% to 8% of women have a potential abnormality on their screening mammograms. Fortunately, most of them do not have breast cancer. Sometimes, normal breast tissue can appear abnormal on a mammogram. Most of the other abnormalities are benign, that is, not cancer.

However, if you have a potentially abnormal mammogram, you may need to come back for a breast examination, a more detailed mammogram, and perhaps an ultrasound of the breast—



a technique that uses high-frequency sound waves instead of x-rays

## American Cancer Society guidelines

- If you are between the ages of 20 and 40:
  - Do a breast self-exam once a month
  - Have a doctor or nurse examine your breasts every 3 years
- If you are age 40 or older:
  - Do a breast self-exam once a month
  - Have a doctor or nurse examine your breasts once a year
  - Have a mammogram once a year

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**American Cancer Society**

800 227-2345

**Cleveland Clinic Breast Center**

216 444-8062 or 800 223-2273 ext 48062

**National Cancer Institute**

800 4-CANCER; <http://rex.nci.nih.gov>

**Susan G. Komen Foundation**

800 462-9273



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