

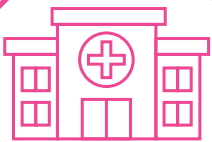
7 things to know about getting a mammogram

Mammograms (breast x-rays) are the best tests we have to find breast cancer early, when treatment is more likely to be successful. Talk with your doctor about when you should get a mammogram. Here's what you need to know about getting a mammogram.

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast that's used to find breast changes. Mammograms are done with a machine that only looks at breast tissue. The machine takes x-rays at lower doses of radiation than the x-rays done to look at other parts of the body.



1 What is a mammogram?



2 Where to get it

Find a center that does many mammograms in a day. When you find a center you like, stick with it. Having all your mammograms at the same place will make it easier for doctors to compare images from one year to the next. If you've had mammograms done at other centers, have those images sent to your new center.

It's best to schedule your mammogram about a week after your menstrual period. Your breasts won't be as tender or swollen, which means less discomfort during the mammogram.



3 When to schedule it



Wear a 2-piece outfit because you will need to remove your top and bra. **Do not** use deodorant, antiperspirant, powder, lotion, or ointment under your arms or on your chest on the day of your mammogram. These products can appear as white spots on the x-ray.



The entire process takes about 20 minutes. The breast is compressed between 2 plastic plates for a few seconds while an x-ray is taken. The plates are moved to a new position, and the breast is compressed again to take another view. The same process is done on the other breast. Flattening the breast can be uncomfortable, but it is needed to provide the clearest view.

You should get your results within 10 days. If you don't, call to ask about them. Your mammogram report will tell you if you have dense breast tissue. Talk with your doctor about what that may mean for you.

If doctors find an area of concern, you may need new x-rays or other tests. That doesn't mean you have cancer. The doctor may have seen something that just looks different or the images weren't clear.



For women who are uninsured or can't afford the cost, free or low-cost mammogram services are available. Some of these programs are held during National Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, while others are offered year round. Call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345** to find a program near you.



Visit **cancer.org/breastcancer** for more breast cancer information and support.

