

Mammogram Patient Information

Your doctor has requested a mammogram. Here are some answers to some frequently asked questions.

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is a low dose X-ray imaging technique of the breasts. It is probably the most important tool doctors have to help them diagnose, evaluate and follow women who have had breast cancer. Mammograms don't prevent breast cancer, but they can save lives by finding breast cancer as early as possible.

However, not all breast cancers can be detected by mammography, so women also need to practice breast self-examination and also get regular breast examinations by a health care professional.

What happens when someone has a mammogram?

A radiographer will help position you in front of the X-ray machine. One breast will be screened at a time. When the machine is switched on, your breast is pressed down between two plates by the machine for a few moments. The compression of the breast helps to give a clear picture for the doctors to examine. Some patients find this compression uncomfortable but it is essential to obtain clear films.

Are there special instructions to be followed before a mammogram?

Yes. Do not use any lotion, deodorant, perfume or body powder around the breasts or under your arms as these can affect the films. We also advise that you wear clothing that allows you to undress from the waist up. This is better for privacy and warmth. We also ask you to bring any previous X-rays with you on the day of your examination.

How long will the procedure take?

You should allow approximately 30 minutes for this procedure. It is quite normal to also have an ultrasound after the mammogram to assist in your diagnosis.

The radiologist will then examine your films, which you will then take home with you and should be kept so that they can be compared with any further examinations. We will then send a report to your doctor.

Please bring any earlier X-rays with you when you attend for your examination.

This examination uses X-rays therefore you will need to inform the radiographer performing the exam if you are pregnant or there is a possibility that you may be pregnant.