

Frequently Asked Questions Things to know!

1. On Breast Self-Exams

What is a breast self-exam?

Breast self-examination (BSE): BSE is a visual and tactile examination of the breast performed by the individual to assess for the presence of any unusual changes or abnormalities. It allows for breast health awareness and is an essential component of an early diagnosis program. It should be encouraged since most breast cancers are self-detected. The breast self-exam empowers women to take control of their health as part of their routine self-care habits.

How should I perform a BSE?

Link to video. [CLICK HERE](#)

How often should I do a BSE?

Set aside a dedicated time every month. If you are menstruate, make sure this is a few days, (for example seven days) after your menstrual period, when the breast tissue is less tender.

If you are no longer menstruating (postmenopausal), choose a consistent day each month (e.g. the 1st) for your self-exam.

What should I look for?

During a BSE, one can Look, Touch and Feel and look for any changes in the size, shape, or symmetry of the breasts. Look for any changes in the skin such as changes in colour, dimpling, puckering, redness, or rashes.

Feel for any lumps, hard knots, or firm thickening in the breast, or underarm-area.

Check for any changes on the nipple area, including any new and unexpected discharge, or nipple retraction (turning inward).

The goal is to know what is normal for you so you'll more easily notice any new changes.

What happens if I find something irregular?

If you find anything unusual or concerning, consult your health care professional.



2. On Clinical Breast Exam

What is a clinical breast exam?

Clinical breast examination (CBE): CBE is a systematic and specific clinical examination of the breast. During the examination, the provider examines the breast, nipples and areola, as well as the armpits and the area above and just below the clavicle (collar bone). CBE is performed as part of clinical breast assessment in addition to medical history taking and a general medical examination when a woman notices a lump or change in her breast, complains of breast pain or swelling, has nipple discharge or skin changes or comes in for a routine breast health check-up.

Who conducts a clinical breast exam?

A clinical breast exam is performed by a trained health care professional. This may be a doctor, nurse or other clinical health workers who may be involved in breast health care.

What happens during a clinical breast exam (CBE)?

A trained health care professional carefully examines your breasts, nipples and areola as well as the armpits and the area above and just below your clavicle (collar bone) for any changes or abnormalities. A clinical breast exam usually only takes a few minutes, but it is thorough enough to give the healthcare professional the information they need to formulate a diagnosis and determine whether additional tests are required.

Women should have a clinical breast exam at least 1-3 years starting at age 25 and every other year starting at age 40 onwards.

What happens if the health professional finds any abnormal findings on the clinical breast exam?

Although most breast lumps are not cancer, you should always have your breasts examined especially where you suspect a breast lump.

Your health professional will guide you on follow-up tests required to confirm whether or not it is breast cancer. It is important that these tests are conducted promptly.

3. On understanding mammograms

What is a mammogram?

Mammogram: A mammogram is an X-ray examination (radiogram) of the breast, including multiple views of one or both breasts. Screening mammograms are offered to eligible women with no breast complaints to check for signs of breast cancer while diagnostic mammograms are done to detect breast disease in women who have breast complaints, such as a lump, pain, or nipple discharge.

Why should I get a mammogram?

For women above forty years, regular mammograms (as part of screening) are the best test to find breast cancer early, sometimes up to three years before it can be felt.

When breast cancer is found early, it can be treated and cured. Most women go on to live long and healthy lives after a breast cancer diagnosis when followed up with timely and complete treatment.

When should I get a mammogram?

Most women should have their first mammogram from age 40 or as per the national guidelines and recommendations. Consult with your health professional on when you should get a mammogram. In certain situations, your doctor may recommend that you have mammograms earlier or more often than usual.

How is a mammogram done?

You will stand in front of a special x-ray machine. A technologist will place your breast on a clear plastic plate.

Another plate will firmly and gently press your breast from above. The plates will flatten the breast, holding it still while the x-ray is being taken. You will feel some pressure. The other breast will be x-rayed in the same way. The steps are then repeated to make a side view of each breast.

You will then wait while the technologist checks the four x-rays to make sure the pictures do not need to be re-done. Do keep in mind that the technologist cannot tell you the results of your mammogram at this stage.

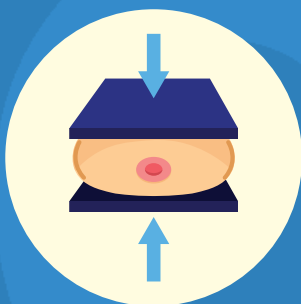
Before you get a mammogram, you may want to ask the health care professional the following questions:

- What will happen? How long will I be there?
- Do you have my previous mammograms?
- When will my doctor get the results?
- When and how will I learn about the results?
- When will I need to have my next mammogram?

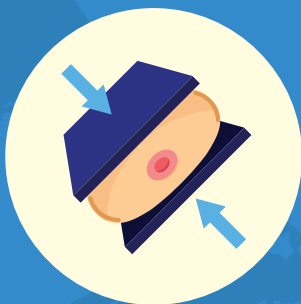
What to expect during a mammogram



Fill out a pre-test questionnaire



Each breast is compressed horizontally between two plates for imaging



Each breast is compressed diagonally between two plates for imaging

What does a mammogram look like?

Everyone's mammogram may look a little different because all breasts are unique. A doctor called a radiologist will read the mammogram for early signs of breast cancer or any other problems.

When will I get the results of my mammogram?

A radiologist reads your mammogram and then reports the results to you or your doctor. This usually takes a few weeks. If there is a concern, you will hear from the mammography facility earlier. Do ask your technologist about usual timelines in the facility.

Tips for getting a mammogram

- Try not to have your mammogram the week before you get your period or during your period. Your breasts may be tender or swollen then.
- On the day of your mammogram, don't wear deodorant, perfume, or powder. These products can show up as white spots on the x-ray.
- You may ask your doctor about your breast density/your doctor might talk to you about your breast density. Many women have dense breasts, in fact nearly half (over 40%) of women over age 40. If dense breast is confirmed, it means additional tests will be required.
- You will need to undress from your waist up for the mammogram. Some women prefer to wear a top with a skirt or pants, instead of a dress.

What happens if my mammogram is normal?

If your mammogram is normal, please consult with your health care provider on when to return. Mammograms work best when they can be compared with previous ones. This allows your doctor to compare them to look for changes in your breasts.

What happens if my mammogram is abnormal?

If it is abnormal, do not panic. An abnormal mammogram does not always mean that there is cancer. But you will need to have additional tests, or exams before the doctor can tell for sure. You may also be referred to a breast specialist or a surgeon. It does not necessarily mean you have cancer or need surgery. These doctors are experts in diagnosing breast problems.

Always consult with your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns.