



# Screening for Breast Cancer and What to Know

## What is breast cancer screening?

Breast cancer screening is a way in which doctors check the breasts for early signs of cancer in people who have no symptoms of breast cancer. The main test used to screen for breast cancer is a special kind of X-ray called a "mammogram."

The goal of breast cancer screening is to find cancer early, before it has a chance to grow, spread, or cause problems. Studies show that being screened for breast cancer lowers your chance of dying from the disease.

Starting at the age of 40, it's important to talk to your doctor or nurse about the benefits and downsides of screening and decide, with your doctor's or nurse's help, whether to get screening and when.

Regular screening with mammograms generally continues through age 74 years. Some people choose to continue getting regular mammograms after this if they are healthy and expected to live for at least 10 more years.

## What are the benefits of being screened for breast cancer?

The main benefit of screening is that it helps doctors find cancer early, when it might be easier to treat. This lowers the chances of dying from breast cancer.

## What happens during a mammogram?

During a mammogram, your breasts will be X-rayed 1 at a time. Each breast is typically X-rayed twice, once from the top down and once from side-to-side. This is so the radiologist can get a good look at all the tissue. To make the breast tissue easier to see, a nurse or technician will flatten each breast between 2 panels. This can be uncomfortable, but it lasts only a few seconds.

Your X-rays will be reviewed by a doctor called a radiologist. If they are able to do this right away, you might get the results the same day. If not, you should get your results within 30 days.

## How often should I have a mammogram?

It is not clear what the best schedule for screening is. Many experts suggest mammograms every 2 years for most people, while others suggest mammograms every year. The schedule screening might also be different if you have a high risk of breast cancer. Talk with your doctor about how often you should have a mammogram based on your risk as well as your preferences.