

Why Are Annual Mammograms Important?

What is a screening mammogram?

A mammogram is a noninvasive X-ray used to check breasts for breast cancer and other abnormalities. It is the only test shown to reduce breast cancer deaths. Mammograms can detect cancer early — when most treatable — long before it can be felt. This improves odds of survival and can help avoid more extensive treatment. A yearly screening mammogram is recommended for women starting at age 40.

What is a diagnostic mammogram?

A diagnostic mammogram is used to check for breast cancer after a lump or another symptom has been identified. Diagnostic mammograms require a longer appointment time than screening mammograms because multiple, more detailed images are taken.

Why start at 40?

- **One in six** breast cancers occur in women aged 40-49.
- **One in eight** women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime.
- About **1 in 69 women** will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer in their 40s.
- Mammography has helped reduce breast cancer mortality in the U.S. **by nearly 40% since 1990.**
- One study shows mammography screening **cuts the risk of dying** from breast cancer nearly in half.
- **Three out of four women diagnosed** with breast cancer have no family history of the disease and are not considered high risk.
- The American College of Radiology (ACR), the Society of Breast Imaging (SBI), the American Society of Breast Surgeons, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), recommend women receive a screening mammogram **every year beginning at age 40, and that all women should have a breast cancer risk assessment by age 25** to determine if they should begin regular screenings earlier.
- The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) says screening for breast cancer **starting at age 40 can save 19% more lives.**

Get the facts about false positives.

Out of every 100 women who get a screening mammogram:

- **90** will be told that their mammograms are normal.
- **10** will be asked to return for additional mammograms or ultrasounds.
- **6** will be reassured that their mammograms are normal.
- **2** will be asked to return in 6 months for a follow-up exam.
- **2** will be recommended to have a needle biopsy.

What factors might increase your breast cancer risk?

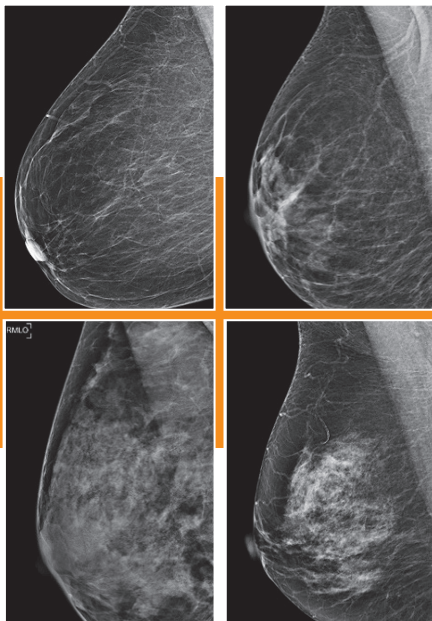
You might be at increased risk for breast cancer if you have:

- Family history of breast cancer, colorectal cancer or ovarian cancer.
- Personal history of breast cancer.
- Known genetic mutation predisposing you to breast cancer
- Had radiation therapy close to your chest.
- Had certain “high-risk” results on breast biopsies such as atypias or pre-cancerous lesions.



Breast Density and You.

What is Breast Density? Breast density is a description of breast composition on a mammogram. Dense breasts have more fibrous and glandular tissue. Dense breasts are normal but can make it more difficult to detect breast cancer with mammography. In Washington state, women receive a letter with their mammogram results informing them of their breast density.



Clockwise from top left shows four categories of breast density: almost entirely fatty, scattered areas of fibroglandular density, heterogeneously dense, and extremely dense.

Images courtesy of the American College of Radiology (ACR).

What factors might increase your breast cancer risk?

You might be at increased risk for breast cancer if you have:

- Dense breast tissue on mammogram
- Began your menstrual period before age 12 or menopause after age 55.
- Used hormone replacement therapy (HRT) with estrogen and progesterone for more than 10 years.
- Personal history of ovarian cancer.
- Recently used birth control pills.
- Never had children, or had your first child after age 30.
- Over age 40. Most breast cancer is diagnosed in women over 40.
- Smoked or used tobacco.

Breast cancer in men is uncommon. This is possibly due to their smaller amount of breast tissue and the fact that men produce less hormones such as estrogen that are known to affect breast cancers in women. In fact, only about 1 in 100 breast cancers affect men and approximately 10 men in one million will develop breast cancer. On average, men with breast cancer are diagnosed at age 68.

Prevention.

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Routine exercise
- Limit alcohol and tobacco consumption
- Breast feeding
- Monthly breast exams and yearly mammogram

Is mammography safe?

Some people are concerned about radiation exposure from the screening. The fact is the risk of harm from radiation exposure is very small. The actual exposure of radiation during a mammogram is about equivalent to having a dental exam or two hours in the sun. The health benefits of getting a mammogram that may diagnose breast cancer in its early stages outweigh any risk of radiation associated with the exam.

Recommendations.

The American College of Radiology (ACR), the Society of Breast Imaging (SBI), the American Society of Breast Surgeons, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), recommend women receive a screening mammogram **every year beginning at age 40, and that all women should have a breast cancer risk assessment by age 25** to determine if they should begin regular screenings earlier.

The fact is that mammography is the best tool available to screen for breast cancer. It has helped reduce the breast cancer death rate in the United States by nearly 40% percent. At present, there are no tests to replace mammography.

Online: www.inlandimaging.com/schedule

Spokane Scheduling: (509) 455.4455

Tri-Cities Scheduling: (509) 374.4030

For a list of our breast imaging center locations, please refer to: **www.inlandimaging.com/locations**. For more information talk with your health care provider or call Inland Imaging at 509.363.7799.

Resources

Most major insurances will cover a screening mammogram. Women should contact their mammography facility or health insurance company for confirmation of the cost and coverage.

However, not everyone may have medical insurance. There are several national and local resources available to women who may need financial help in order to have a screening mammogram.



For more information:

American College of Radiology

1.800.227.5463 | www.acr.org

American Cancer Society

509.328.9373 | www.cancer.org

Breast, Cervical & Colon Health

1.888.438.2247 | www.doh.wa.gov

CHAS Health

509.444.8200 | www.chas.org

Every Woman Can

509.939.8715 | www.everywomancan.org

Society of Breast Imaging

517.893.5185 | sbi-online.org

****Facts and figures sources:** American Cancer Society, American College of Radiology (ACR), Society of Breast Imaging (SBI), U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), 5/2023

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