

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BREAST DENSITY

Mammography is the Gold Standard

The purpose of screening is to enable the early detection of breast cancer, so we can find it when it's small and most easily treatable. Early detection begins with mammography—the only screening tool proven to reduce breast cancer deaths.

What is Breast Density?

- Breast density is a description of how your breast appears on a mammogram. It is determined by the radiologist, the doctor reading the mammogram.
- Breasts are made up of fibrous and glandular tissue and fatty tissue. On the mammogram, fibrous and glandular tissue appears white and fatty tissue appears black. A dense breast contains mostly white fibrous and glandular tissue.
- There are four categories of breast density on a mammogram: almost entirely fatty, scattered areas of fibroglandular density, heterogeneously dense, and extremely dense. Women with mammograms that are heterogeneously dense or extremely dense are considered to have "dense breasts".
- Breast density may decrease with age, but for most women there is little change.
- Dense breasts are normal and common. About half of all women have dense breasts.

Why is Breast Density Important?

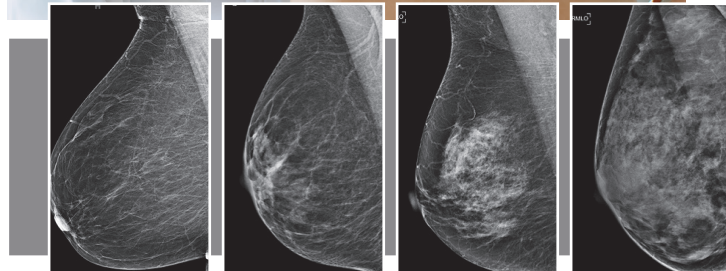
- Having dense breasts may make it more difficult to spot a cancer on a mammogram.
- Dense breast tissue also slightly increases a woman's risk for developing breast cancer. There are factors other than breast density which may place a woman at increased risk for breast cancer, including family history, chest radiation treatments, and genetics. You should discuss all risk factors with your clinician.

What Should I Do If I Have Dense Breasts?

Speak with your provider about breast density and discuss if there are any other factors which may increase your risk for breast cancer.

Inland Imaging, the American College of Radiology and the Washington State Radiological Society recommend women get a screening mammogram once a year beginning at age 40. No matter the breast density the only medical imaging test proven to reduce breast cancer deaths is a screening mammogram. Every woman's breast health is better evaluated with 3D mammography.

For additional information, go to: www.mammographysaveslives.org, wa-densebreastanswers.org, and densebreast-info.org/information-for-dense-breast-patients.aspx.



Left to right: 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).