



Introduction – Mammography

A mammogram is an x-ray image of the breast, which can detect subtle differences in tissue density.

Mammograms are used to detect abnormalities in the breast tissue, and are used to screen for and diagnose breast cancer. The breast is flattened or compressed in order to prevent movement, decrease the amount of radiation required and to produce the best image possible.

Procedure

Preparation

You will be advised of your preparation instructions prior to your appointment.

How it Works

You may be given a gown that opens in the front for the procedure. In a standard examination, two images of each breast are taken--one from the top (called a cranio-caudal or CC view) and one from the side (called a mediolateral oblique or MLO view). This ensures that the images display as much breast tissue as possible and to have two pictures at 90 degrees to each other, in order to pinpoint the location of any areas of interest.

The examination can be uncomfortable due to the compression of the breast but should not be painful and it only lasts seconds. The appointment takes approximately 20-30 minutes. Please do not wear any jewelry or apply deodorant or cream in any area around the breast as metals in these materials can affect the image.

Benefits

The major benefit of a mammogram is the early detection of breast cancer in women. Mammography can detect microscopic calcifications and small masses that would never be noticed through self-examination. Early detection of breast cancer significantly increases the patient's chances of successfully treating the disease.

Risks

Mammography uses very small doses of radiation. All precautions are taken to ensure that only the necessary amount of radiation is used to complete the procedure. Please advise your doctor and the technologists performing the procedure if there is any possibility that you may be **pregnant or breastfeeding**.

Referrals

Screening mammograms are recommended for women over 40 years of age, who do not:

- Have a history of breast cancer or new breast complaints
- Are pregnant or breast-feeding.
- Have breast implants
- Have had a mammogram on both breasts in the last 12 months (you must wait at least one year between screening mammograms)

A doctor's referral is not required. Appointments can be booked:

- on-line <https://breastbooking.bccancer.bc.ca/booking/start.html> or
- by calling the Screening Mammography Program of BC at 1-800- 663-9203. Local numbers are also available in the Contact Us section of the breast booking website.

Diagnostic Mammograms require a doctor's referral and appointments are required. Your physician will submit a requisition and then you will be contacted by the Diagnostic Imaging department with an appointment date and time.

Results

A radiologist, who is a physician specifically trained to supervise and interpret radiology examinations, will analyze the images and send a report to your referring physician, who will share the results with you.

Language

If the patient has difficulty understanding English, an interpreter needs to accompany the patient.