

Breast Cancer Screening

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer is a cancer that develops in the breast tissue. It can start in one or both breasts when cells begin to grow out of control. Breast cancer occurs almost entirely in women and non-binary people with breasts but anyone can get breast cancer.

Who should be screened for Breast Cancer?

Screening mammography is recommended for average risk women and non-binary people with breasts between the ages of 45-74 every 2 years. Individuals who have *high* risk factors should have a screening mammogram every year.

High Risk Factors

- **Family history** - First degree family history (parent, child, sibling with breast cancer)
- Personal or first degree family history of ovarian cancer
- **Genetics** - Confirmed BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes
- **Breast Density Category D**-extremely dense (as shown on previous mammogram)
- Radiation to the chest area
- Personal history of biopsies showing Atypical Ductal Hyperplasia

If you are between the ages of **40-44, or 75 years and older** talk to your healthcare provider about whether a screening mammogram is recommended for you.

Why should I be screened?

Mammograms save lives. ***Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in NWT women and non-binary people with breasts, accounting for nearly one third of cancer diagnosis and is the 3rd leading cause of cancer related death.*** Regular screening mammograms can find breast cancer early, allowing for more treatment options and a better chance of recovery.

What is a Mammogram?

A mammogram is a specialized x-ray of the breast, completed in privacy by a specially-trained technologist. A mammogram detect changes in breast tissue.

What do I need to do to prepare for a mammogram?

- Wear a 2-piece outfit (like a top and pants or top and skirt); you will have to undress from the waist up but will be provided a gown.
- Do not wear deodorant, powders or lotions the day of your mammogram. These products can interfere with the exam and leave residue that make it hard to read your mammogram.

What happens during a mammogram?

1. A mammography technologist (specially-trained technologist) will place your breast on the mammography machine.
2. A plastic plate will be moved down slowly to compress your breast and hold it in place.
3. There will be some pressure for a few seconds on the breast, much like a tight blood pressure cuff. This pressure is applied to spread your breast tissue to see it better and make sure your breast stays still during the picture. The mammography technologist is trained to make sure the experience is as comfortable as possible. The pressure will release as soon as the picture is taken.
4. Pictures are taken from different angles of each breast. Sometimes additional images may be needed to ensure a complete examination of the breast tissue.

What if my mammogram result is abnormal?

An abnormal mammogram result does not necessarily mean you have breast cancer; however further testing is important and your healthcare provider may recommend additional tests such as additional mammography images, ultrasound or biopsy.

If you have additional questions or to make arrangements for a screening mammogram please contact your healthcare provider.