

Breast Cancer Screening

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Breast cancer screening is an important part of a woman's wellness. The goal in screening is to find cancer so it can be treated. In many cases, the earlier cancer is found the easier it is to treat.

There are different types of breast cancer screening. Which type you have depends on your age, your risk factors, and personal choice. It's important to talk with your healthcare provider about which types of screening are best for you.

Types of Breast Cancer Screening

The most common type of breast cancer screening is a mammogram. This is an X-ray of the breasts. It's done with a machine that presses each breast between plates, and then takes an X-ray picture using a small amount of radiation.

This can show areas in breast tissue that may be cancer and are too small to be felt.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends that you get screened for breast cancer every other year starting at age 40 and keep getting screened through age 74. But you and your doctor can decide what's right for you.

You may have an ultrasound if a spot is found on your mammogram and your healthcare provider wants more information.

During the test a clear gel is put on your breast. An ultrasound technician presses a flat wand onto the skin over and around your breast. The wand uses sound waves to create images on a video screen.

In some cases, such as in women with high risk for breast cancer, an MRI may be used to view breast tissue. An MRI is a type of imaging test done with magnets and a computer.

It can show kinds of tissue that mammograms and ultrasound can't. You may need an MRI if a lump is found with another type of test.

A healthcare provider may sometimes advise a clinical breast exam. This is done in your healthcare provider's office or other healthcare setting.

Your healthcare provider will move their hands around and over your breasts and armpits. This will be done while you are lying down and when you are sitting up or standing.

You may be asked to raise and lower your arms. This exam may help find lumps in breast tissue. Your healthcare provider will also look for dimples on your breast skin or other changes.

Talk with your healthcare provider about the type of screening you may need.

When to Get a Breast Cancer Screening

You should get screened for breast cancer with a mammogram every other year starting at age 40.

After Your Breast Cancer Screening

After your breast cancer screening, your healthcare provider will talk with you about the results.

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If something unusual shows up on a test your healthcare provider may want you to have more tests. These may include another imaging test such as a diagnostic mammogram. This takes pictures from more angles to get a more complete view of the breast tissue.

You may also have a biopsy. This is a procedure to take a small sample of tissue from the breast. The sample is checked with a microscope to look for cancer cells.

Things to Remember.

Breast cancer screening should be a regular part of every woman's health routine. Tell your healthcare provider if you have a family or personal history of breast cancer. Have breast cancer regular screening as often as is advised by your healthcare provider.

What We Have Learned.

A mammogram is the same as an ultrasound. True or false?

This is false. A mammogram is a type of X-ray and uses radiation.

An ultrasound uses sound waves and a computer to make images. An ultrasound may be done after a mammogram to get more information.

Women should start screening for breast cancer with a mammogram every other year starting at age 40.

True or false?

This is true.