



The Importance of Mammograms

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast and surrounding tissue that is used to look for breast cancer. Mammograms can find cancers when they are too small to be felt. Finding cancer when it's small and hasn't spread gives the best chance for successful treatment.

Who Should Have a Mammogram?

The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends an annual screening mammogram for women between the ages of 45 and 54 with an average risk for breast cancer. Beginning at age 55, a screening mammogram is recommended every other year as long as the woman is healthy.* Women with risk factors for breast cancer should talk with their doctor about when to begin screening mammograms.

What To Expect During a Mammogram

A mammogram usually consists of two X-rays of each breast, sometimes more for women with large breasts or breast implants. During a mammogram, the breast is compressed between two plastic plates. The compression is necessary to ensure minimal movement and a sharper image. Although the compression may be uncomfortable, it only lasts a few seconds.

Mammogram Tips

Before scheduling your mammogram, talk with your doctor about any breast symptoms or problems you may be having, prior

surgeries, hormone use, and any family or personal history of breast cancer. To make your exam more comfortable and ensure a good image, follow these tips:

- Schedule your exam for when your breasts are not tender or swollen. Try to avoid the week just before your period.
- On the day of the exam, do not wear deodorant, powder or cream under your arms.
- Wear pants or a skirt so you will only need to remove your top and bra for the exam.

Most women will receive a letter within 30 days saying their results are normal. However, if something suspicious is found, you will be called back for additional tests. While this is scary, it does not mean you have cancer. In fact, according to the ACS, less than 10% of women called back actually have breast cancer. Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns or questions.

**For benefit coverage, visit TRICARE's Covered Services page at www.tricare.mil/coveredservices. Ask your doctor for age recommendations and risk guidelines.*



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