

MAMMOGRAPHY

What is a Mammogram?

Mammography is a non-invasive type of imaging that uses a low-dose x-ray system to examine breasts. It is used to assist in the early detection and diagnosis of breast diseases. Mammograms can be used to detect early breast cancer in women experiencing no symptoms, or as a diagnostic tool to detect and diagnose breast disease in women experiencing symptoms such as a lump, pain or nipple discharge.

Is there any preparation required?

- Inform the radiographer if there is any chance you may be pregnant.
- You must bring any previous mammograms or breast ultrasounds to the exam.

There are no particular preparations required, however for your comfort, the best time for a mammogram is during the week following your period.

At the time of your booking please notify staff if you have breast implants.

In addition, let the radiographer know of any prior surgeries, hormone use, and family or personal history of breast cancer.

We also ask that you:

- Do not wear talcum powder or lotion under your arms or on your breasts on the day of the exam. These can appear on the mammogram as calcium spots.
- Describe any breast symptoms or problems to the radiographer performing the exam.

What will happen during the mammogram?

You will be required to undress above the waist. During the exam, a specially qualified radiographer will position your breast in the mammography unit. Your breast will be placed on a special platform and compressed with a clear plastic paddle.

Breast compression is necessary in order to:

- Even out the breast thickness so that all of the tissue can be visualised and small abnormalities are less likely to be obscured by overlying tissue.
- Allow the use of a lower x-ray dose as the breast tissue is thinner.
- Hold the breast still to minimise blurring of the image caused by motion.

The radiographer will stand behind a glass shield in the room during the x-ray exposure. You must hold very still and may be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds while the x-ray image is taken to reduce the possibility of a blurred image.

You will feel pressure on your breast as it is squeezed by the compression paddle. Some women with sensitive breasts may experience discomfort but the radiographer will discuss this with you and the compression can be reduced if necessary.

How long will it take?

Your appointment should take about 20 minutes.

Are there any risks?

There is always a slight risk from exposure to radiation, however, the effective radiation dose from a mammogram is extremely low. The benefit of an accurate diagnosis far outweighs the minimal risk.

Are there any side or after effects?

No. You may resume normal activity immediately after the procedure.

When will I get the results?

A radiologist will analyse the images, and your films and signed report will usually be ready within 40 – 60 minutes to take to your referring physician who will discuss the results with you. We will maintain digital records of your exam in our archive system to access it in future if required.