

Should I have a mammogram?

Age 40-49



BREAST CANCER SCREENING

Breast cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer among American women. Due to early detection, a new personalized approach to treatment and a better understanding of the disease, breast cancer survival rates have increased and the number of deaths have been on a steady decline. Some expert organizations recommend you receive a baseline screening mammogram at age 40, while others recommend routine screening at 50 years old. To decide what is best for you, you should consider the benefits and risks that can result from having a mammogram, as well as, understand your risk of breast cancer.

It's important that if you currently have any breast symptoms such as pain or lumps that you see your healthcare provider right away and don't wait for a screening test.

What is a screening mammogram?

A mammogram is the best screening tool used to find breast cancer in women who have no signs or symptoms of the disease. It uses x-rays to create an image of the breast. It can find breast cancer early when it is small, before it can be felt and the chances of survival are highest.

The Portland Clinic's recommendation:

Whether to start regular screening mammography at age 40 or age 50 should be an individual decision between you and your healthcare provider.

BEFORE YOU DECIDE WHEN TO START REGULAR MAMMOGRAM SCREENINGS:

- 1 Have a baseline mammogram at age 40 to determine if you have **dense breasts**, which can effect your breast cancer risk.
- 2 Understand your personal breast cancer risk.
- 3 Weigh the benefits and potential harms of screening mammography.
- 4 Discuss your decision with your healthcare provider.

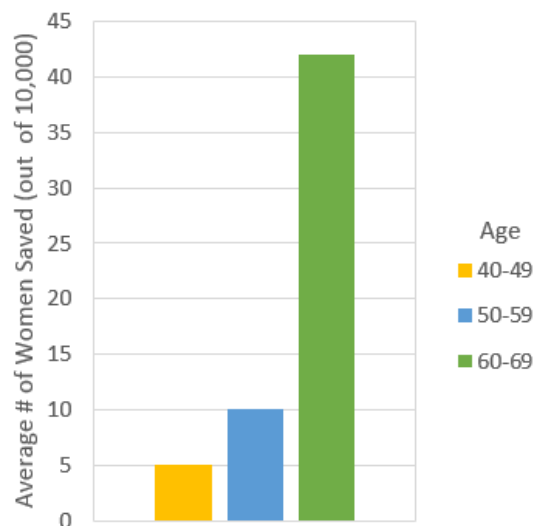
Key Considerations:

- Women age 40-49 with **average** breast cancer risk— the harms from screening mammogram may outweigh the benefits.
- Women age 40-49 with **higher** breast cancer risk— regular screening mammograms beginning at 40 may be beneficial.
- There may be a slightly higher chance of finding cancer at a later and less curable stage with mammograms beginning at age 50, instead of 40.
- Starting regular mammography at age 50 instead of 40 reduces the possible harms of mammography.

What are the benefits?

Screening mammograms can find breast cancer early, before you have symptoms. Finding cancer earlier may mean it can be more easily treated and cured. Breast cancer is not common in women age 40-49 with **average** risk. The benefits of screening mammograms become greater as women get older.

Likelihood of a mammogram saving you from dying of breast cancer as you age.



The Journal of the American Medical Association, April 2014

What are the possible harms?

Radiation Exposure -

Mammography is considered to be at very low risk. For comparison, the amount of radiation that a woman receives from a digital mammogram is approximately one seventh of the total dose that we are exposed to on a yearly basis from natural sources.

False Positives -

A “false positive” on a mammogram can occur when a mammogram shows a spot that looks questionable, but further testing shows there was no cancer.

Some cancers will not show up on mammograms.

Overdiagnosis and overtreatment -

Studies vary in how often overdiagnosis and overtreatment occur, but it is estimated that...

out of 5 women diagnosed with breast cancer from a mammogram



1 woman is overdiagnosed.

For every 1 woman saved from a screening mammogram...



7 women will receive unneeded treatment.



Are you at increased risk?

Some factors may increase your risk:

- ✓ A first degree relative (mother, daughter or sister) who has had breast cancer.
- ✓ A previous abnormal breast biopsy (atypia).
- ✓ A previous normal breast biopsy (benign).
- ✓ Dense breasts identified through a mammogram.
- ✓ Previous radiation treatments to the chest.

Risk Assessment Tool:

A breast cancer **risk assessment tool** is available through the National Cancer Institute, where you can use the tool to estimate your personal risk of developing breast cancer.

www.cancer.gov/bcrisktool

Dense Breast Tissue

What is breast density?

Breast density is a measure used to describe the proportion of the different tissues (milk ducts and lobules) that make up a woman's breasts. Breast density is not a measure of how the breasts feel but rather how the breasts look on a mammogram. Your breasts are considered dense if you have more fibrous tissue and not much fatty tissue.

What if I have dense breasts?

If your mammogram shows that your breast tissue is dense, know that dense breast tissue is common and not abnormal. However, dense breast tissue can make it harder to evaluate the results of your mammogram and may also be associated with an increased risk of breast cancer. Information about your breast density is given to you to raise your awareness and to provide discussion with your healthcare provider. Together, you can decide if you may benefit from further screening.

If you are at increased risk:

The Portland Clinic recommends that women at increased risk should begin having annual mammograms at age 40. You should talk with your healthcare provider to determine if you are considered to be at increased risk.

In Conclusion:

If you are worried about breast cancer, we encourage you to have a conversation with your healthcare provider. It is reasonable to consider having regular mammograms if you feel that without them you will be extremely worried. Your own values and preferences can help you decide if you want to start having mammograms before age 50 and how often.

Resources:

The Journal of the American Medical Association, April 2014

www.cancer.gov

www.cancer.org

Confluence Health

National Cancer Institute