

How often should I have a mammogram?

Age 50-74



BREAST CANCER SCREENING

Breast cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer among American women. All major health organizations recommend routine mammograms for women ages 50-74 to screen for breast cancer. The benefits of routine screening mammograms are clear for women ages 50-74, yet not clear how often mammograms should be done. Some expert organizations recommend a mammogram every year, while others recommend every two years. To decide what is best for you, 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:

The Portland Clinic recommends you have a mammogram every 1-2 years if you are age 50-74.

BEFORE YOU DECIDE HOW OFTEN TO HAVE REGULAR SCREENING MAMMOGRAMS:

- 1 Understand your personal breast cancer risk
- 2 Weigh the benefits and potential harms of screening mammography.
- 3 Discuss your decision with your healthcare provider.

Key Considerations:

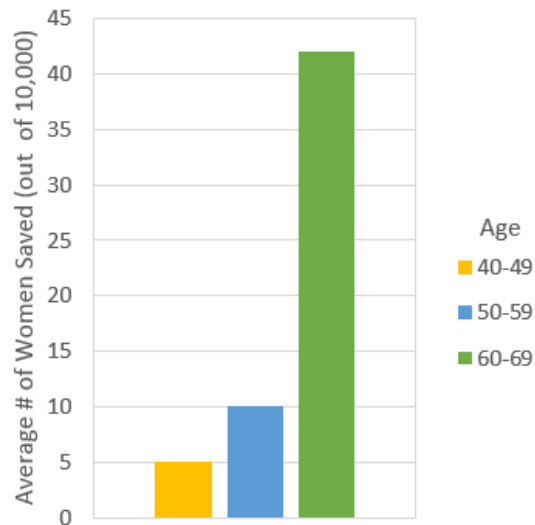
- Women age 50-74 with **average** breast cancer risk— most studies tell us that having a mammogram every two years has about the same overall benefit of having one every year.

- Women age 50-74 with **higher** breast cancer risk— yearly screening mammograms may be better.
- There may be a slightly higher chance of finding cancer at an earlier, more curable stage with yearly mammograms.
- Having a mammogram only every two years lowers 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. Regular screening mammograms reduce your chances of dying of breast cancer. The benefits of screening mammograms increase with age.

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.

Over-diagnosis and over-treatment -

Studies vary in how often over-diagnosis 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 have mammograms every year. If you are not at increased risk but still worry about waiting two years for your next

mammogram, you should talk with your healthcare provider to determine what frequency is right for you.

Resources:

The Journal of the American Medical Association, April 2014

www.cancer.gov

www.cancer.org

Confluence Health

National Cancer Institute