

# Mammograms

## What is a mammogram, and why should I have one?

A mammogram is a safe, low-dose X-ray of the breast. It is still the best tool we have to find breast cancer early and save lives. All women age 40 and older should have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years.

## What if I notice any changes in my breast?

- Mammograms are very useful, but they cannot find all problems.
- If you notice a change in your breast like a lump, thickening, or liquid leaking from the nipple, call your doctor or clinic right away.
- Many breast changes are not cancer, but only a doctor can know for sure.

## How can I be sure I'm getting the best mammogram?

The FDA enforces The Mammography Quality Standards Act (MQSA). MQSA is a national law that approves all of the places where you can get a mammogram. This includes:

- Clinics
- Hospitals
- Doctors' offices
- Mammogram vans

The FDA MQSA also makes sure that all of the people who work there have the right training and education, including the people who:

- Test the equipment to make sure it's working
- Take your mammogram
- Study your mammogram

## What about my results?

- Your results should be mailed to you in 30 days.
- If you don't get them in 30 days, call the clinic to ask for them.
- If you want a second opinion, or if you change doctors, the law gives you the right to keep original mammograms.

## What if I have a major problem with my exam or clinic?

- Talk with the person on staff whose job it is to handle problems and complaints.
- If your clinic can't help you, don't give up. Find out who approves your clinic. Make sure to get the company name, address, and phone number, and name of a person you can talk to.
- If that doesn't fix your problem, call FDA at 1-800-838-7715.



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## What if I have breast implants?

- When you make your appointment, make sure to say that you have breast implants.
- If the clinic doesn't accept patients with implants, ask them for the name and phone number of one that does.
- When you get to your appointment, remind the staff that you have implants.
- You will need a person who is trained to X-ray women with implants. Implants can hide breast tissue and make it harder to find problems.

## What is digital mammography?

Regular mammograms are viewed on X-ray film. Digital mammograms are viewed on a computer.

## Who should think about having digital mammography?

- Women under 50 years old.
- Women with "dense" breasts. (Breasts that have more tissue than fat.)
- Call your clinic or doctor to see if digital mammography is right for you.

**FDA Office of Women's Health** <http://www.fda.gov/womens>

## To Learn More:

### FDA Center for Devices and Radiological Health Mammography website:

<http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/mammography>

### Digital mammography website:

[www.fda.gov/cdrh/mammography/dig-faq.html](http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/mammography/dig-faq.html)

### National Cancer Institute (NCI)

<http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancertopics/types/breast>

### National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-422-6237

TTY/TDD: 1-800-332-8615