

Breast Exams & Mammograms

Every woman's wellness plan should include regular breast exams. Doing so can help you become aware early if any abnormal changes occur.

There are three tests that are commonly used to examine breast tissue.

Breast self-exam (BSE)

Breast self-exam is an exam to check your own breasts for lumps or anything else that seems unusual.

Clinical breast exam (CBE)

A clinical breast exam is an exam of the breast by a doctor or other health professional. The doctor will carefully feel the breasts and under the arms for lumps or anything else that seems unusual.

Mammogram

A mammogram is a low-dose X-ray picture of the breast. A mammogram along with a breast exam by your doctor or nurse can find breast cancer at an early stage when it can best be treated. A mammogram **does not** cause cancer. Because the amount of radiation used is very low, the risk of any harm is extremely small.

What happens during a mammogram?

A mammogram is a simple test. When you go for a mammogram, the technician taking the picture will place your breast between two X-ray panels. The panels will push your breast between them to get a clear picture. You may feel a little bit of discomfort but each X-ray takes less than 1 minute.

Who should get one?

Women in their 40s and older should get a mammogram every 1 to 2 years. A woman's chance of getting breast cancer is greater as she ages.

Why should I have one?

Mammograms can save your life by finding breast cancer early. A mammogram can show cancer that is too small for you or your doctor to feel. When breast cancer is found early, you have more treatment options.

Did you know? A breast lump has to be about one inch in diameter, or about the size of a quarter, for a woman to feel it herself, while a mammogram can reveal an abnormality as small as a pencil eraser. (source: American Cancer Society)

How do I get a mammogram?

- Ask your doctor today about a referral.
- Make an appointment with a mammography center approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Your doctor or nurse can help you find one.

- When you go for your mammogram, do not wear lotions, powders, perfumes, or deodorant. They can cause shadows on the X-ray picture.
- Follow up with your doctor to get the results.

For more information on women's health, visit MyHealth@Anthem powered by WebMD at www.anthem.com. Also visit the following sites:

National Cancer Institute - www.cancer.gov

American Cancer Society – www.cancer.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – www.cdc.gov

National Institutes of Health – www.nih.gov

Source: National Cancer Institute, www.cancer.gov