

# MAMMOGRAMS can save your life.

## COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS/CONCERNS ABOUT MAMMOGRAPHY

### **WHAT IS A MAMMOGRAM?**

- Mammography is the process of taking an X-ray image of the breast. A mammogram is the image itself.
- This test can identify abnormalities such as cysts, areas of calcification or other changes in the breast tissue before they can be felt by a woman or her health care provider.
- Screening mammograms are used to look for breast disease in women who are asymptomatic; that is, those who appear to have no breast problems.

### **WHO NEEDS A MAMMOGRAM?**

- Screening mammograms are recommended annually to every 2 years for women age 45 and older.
- Based on your age and risk factors, your primary care provider may choose to discuss a different schedule with you.
- Women under 45 with a family history of breast cancer or other concerns should talk with a healthcare provider. Screening tests may be needed more often and/or started earlier.

### **WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO HAVE A MAMMOGRAM?**

- Anytime is truly a good time, but if you have sensitive breasts, try having a mammogram at a time during the month when your breasts will be less tender.
- Try to avoid the week right before your period.

### **HOW DO I PREPARE FOR A MAMMOGRAM?**

- Avoid deodorant, perfume or cream under your arms, on your chest or on the breast the day of your exam. These may interfere with the quality of the image.
- Wear a blouse or shirt with shorts or slacks. You will have to undress above the waist for the exam.
- Please bring previous mammogram films from other facilities to your appointment if available.

### **WILL THE MAMMOGRAM HURT?**

The compression of the breast may be slightly uncomfortable, but should not be painful. Tell the technologist if previous mammograms have been painful.

## **BREAST CANCER RISK FACTORS:**

The most significant risk factors for breast cancer are often beyond your control.

**Gender**-Although men can get breast cancer too, women's breast cells are constantly changing and growing. This is mainly due to the activity of female hormones estrogen and progesterone.

**Age**-As you get older, your risk of breast cancer goes up. Most invasive breast cancers (those that have spread from where they started) are found in women age 45 and older.

**Family History**-If you have a first-degree relative (mother, daughter, sister) who has breast cancer, or you have multiple relatives affected by breast or ovarian cancer, you could be at higher risk. Discuss these risks with your health care provider or schedule an appointment with the Goshen Retreat Women's Health Center High Risk Breast Clinic.

## **TO REDUCE YOUR RISK OF BREAST CANCER:**

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Limit your alcohol intake
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid tobacco use
- Eat a low fat, high fiber diet

## **WARNING SIGNS OF BREAST CANCER:**

There are rarely signs of breast cancer until the disease has progressed beyond its early stages. The best way to detect breast cancer early is by continuing annual screening mammograms.

## **DETECTABLE WARNING SIGNS:**

- A lump or thickening felt in the breast
- Nipple retraction
- Change in the size or shape of the breast
- Skin irritation or dimpling
- Discharge from the nipple

## **WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY HEALTHCARE PROVIDER?**

If you are currently experiencing any symptoms such as those listed above, you should contact your health care provider immediately. Once you are experiencing breast problems, we will need your health care provider to provide an order for a diagnostic mammogram. Screening mammograms can be completed without a doctor's order before you have symptoms.

## **TO LEARN MORE:**

- BreastCancer.org
- American Cancer Society Cancer.org (610) 642-6550 (800) 227-2345
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC.gov (800) 232-4636
- National Cancer Institute Cancer.gov (800) 422-6237



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