

Mammography Guidebook





Protecting Yourself From Breast Cancer.

Fortunately, with early detection and effective treatment, breast cancer has an extraordinarily high long-term survival rate. Routine screenings continue to catch cancer early and save women's lives. A mammogram is the most effective way to detect breast cancer at the earliest possible stage, before it can spread to other parts of the body. Self-examination is not a substitute for a mammogram, but it's important to be familiar with how your breasts normally look and feel, so you can report any changes to your doctor right away.



Understanding Mammograms

A mammogram is simply a low-dose X-ray examination of the breast, and there are two types. The first type, known as a screening mammogram, is a preventive screening for women who have not experienced any abnormal breast symptoms. The American College of Radiology recommends annual screening mammography for women starting at age 40. Based on your specific risk factors, such as medical history and family history, your doctor can advise when and how often you should have a screening mammogram.

The second type, a diagnostic mammogram, is for women who display symptoms that need to be investigated, such as a breast lump or nipple discharge. They may also be performed as a follow-up if your screening mammogram showed a potential problem or irregularity.

Digital Mammography

At UChicago Medicine AdventHealth, we use the most advanced tools in digital mammography, including 3D mammography and computer-aided detection. This allows our imaging specialists to detect subtle differences between tissues — pinpointing areas of concern, including cancerous tissue, benign tumors and cysts well before they can be detected by touch.

After your mammogram, a radiologist will use computer-aided detection tools to read the digital images — looking for any signs of abnormality, including asymmetries, irregular areas of increased density and clusters of small calcium deposits. These tools have substantially improved breast imaging in recent years, especially for women with dense breast tissue. Your images can be enhanced by computer technology and stored digitally.

Self-Referred Mammogram

Many UChicago Medicine AdventHealth locations offer self-referred screening mammograms for women age 40 and older who have not had a mammogram in the last year and have no breast symptoms. These women can refer themselves without a physician's prescription. Results are sent directly to the patient and her primary care physician. However, it's best to talk to your doctor to determine when you should start having mammograms — even if you plan on self-referring.

Myths About Mammograms

Myth 1: A mammogram takes too long.

Fact: Digital mammography is more efficient than ever. Patients typically complete a screening mammogram in less than 30 minutes. Plus, our locations offer lunchtime and evening appointments, as well as walk-in availability.

Myth 2: Mammograms cost too much.

Fact: Most insurance companies cover the full cost of a screening mammogram as it is typically considered preventive care. Special cash pay rates are available and other funding may be available for mammograms and other breast services if you do not have medical insurance or Medicaid.

Myth 3: Mammograms are painful.

Fact: Mammograms may be uncomfortable but should not be painful. The level of discomfort you experience should be much less than in years past due to the new compression paddle design that flexes with your body, providing pressure only where needed.

Myth 4: Radiation from mammograms can cause cancer.

Fact: Mammograms are very safe. Digital mammography uses the lowest radiation dose required to produce clear and precise images. The amount of radiation is roughly equivalent to what you would experience on a cross-country flight.

Breast Health Advice

Some great ways to decrease your cancer risk and improve your overall wellness are:

- Begin an exercise program and work out at least three times per week.
- Eat a healthy diet and maintain a normal weight.
- Examine the stress in your life and try to find ways to reduce it.
- Stay connected to your support network.
- Schedule an annual physical exam.
- Report any changes in how your breasts look or feel to your doctor right away.





The UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Philosophy of Care

As a top academic medical institution and a national leader in whole-person care, UChicago Medicine AdventHealth is dedicated to providing excellent medical care to the communities we serve. Our care is designed to heal the body, ease the mind and uplift the spirit of every patient. Plus, we strive to provide easy access to some of the most innovative treatments, advanced medical technology and pioneering clinical trials — all designed to help you feel whole.

We're here for you.

Our patients and their families are our top priority. That's why we are constantly exploring the boundaries of what's possible through clinical research, treatment and innovation to help improve the lives of the people we serve.

Nationally Ranked Care

We are dedicated to bringing world-class healthcare to every patient. Our efforts have consistently earned us national recognition for quality and safety, and a reputation for delivering unrivaled comfort and compassion.

Experts You Can Rely On

We are home to internationally renowned doctors, researchers and specialists, so you can always count on extraordinary care when you need it most.

Let's talk in person.

For more information about UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Mammography, call us at 800-734-3183.

This guide is provided to the general public to disseminate health-related information. The information is not intended to be used for diagnosing or prescribing. Please consult your physician before undertaking any form of medical treatment and/or adopting any exercise program or dietary guidelines.

UChicago Medicine AdventHealth complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

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