

## Mammography is...

...the most effective and accurate way to detect breast abnormalities – and it does so at the earliest possible stage when they can be treated with greater ease and more success.

This brochure answers some of the most commonly asked questions regarding mammography. It can be a useful guide if you're about to have a mammogram or if you're just considering having one. Remember that by getting regular mammograms you can help to protect your health...

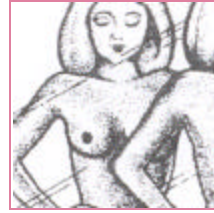
...For You, For Life



If you cannot keep your appointment, let us know as soon as possible by calling 623-7962, ext. 214.

## The Simple Steps of Breast Self-Examination

### 1 IN FRONT OF YOUR MIRROR



- Face the mirror with your arms at your sides. Look at your breasts for lumps, dimples, unusual shapes or other changes in appearance.
- Repeat the procedure with your arms raised above your head.
- Now, with your hands on your hips and with your chest muscles tensed, look for lumps or changes.
- Finally, lean over and observe your breasts one more time for any changes.

### 2 WHILE LYING DOWN



- Lie on your back in a comfortable position and place a pillow under your left shoulder.
- Examine your entire left breast with your right hand, using one of the patterns shown below.
- Hold your fingers flat against your breast tissue as you press with light, medium and firm pressure in dime- to quarter-sized circles, using the pattern you selected.
- Now move the pillow under your right shoulder and examine your entire right breast.



### 3 WHILE SHOWERING



- While in the shower, check your breasts and underarm area for any lumps or thickening. Your soapy hands will glide more easily over the wet skin.
- Examine your breasts in the shower using the same procedure you used above, in step 2, "While Lying Down."



## A Guide to Mammography



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## Answers To Your Questions

### WHAT IS A MAMMOGRAM?

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast.

### WHY DO I NEED ONE?

Mammograms can pinpoint very small abnormalities before they can be physically felt.

### WHEN SHOULD I GET ONE?

The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that women ages 50 and over get a mammogram every second year. Depending on your risk factors (for example, if you have a family history of breast cancer), your doctor may recommend a different schedule.

### WHERE & HOW IS A MAMMOGRAM DONE?

Your mammogram may be done at a hospital, clinic, mobile mammography van or mammography facility. A technologist trained in mammography performs the test with specially designed x-ray equipment. A physician who specializes in radiology interprets the mammogram for you and your doctor.

### HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

The entire examination is usually completed in as little as 15 minutes. Typically, the technologist will take two or more pictures of each breast after it has been gently compressed. This compression results in a mammogram that is as clear and detailed as possible, and reduces the amount of x-ray exposure. You may be asked to wait while your mammogram is reviewed, just to be sure additional x-ray views are not needed.

### HOW DOES IT FEEL?

The procedure will produce a feeling of pressure or tightness for just a few seconds. If you are uncomfortable, let your technologist know. To minimize the possibility of discomfort, try to schedule your mammogram following your period when your breasts are less likely to be tender. It may also help to avoid consuming caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate, cola) for one to two weeks before your exam.

### If you are between 20 and 39 years of age...

- Have a yearly physical exam.
- Do a regular breast self-exam (for example, once a month).

### If you are between 40 and 49 years of age...

- Have a yearly physical exam.
- Do a regular breast self-exam (for example, once a month).
- Ask your doctor about having a mammogram.

### If you are between 50 and 74 years of age...

- Have a yearly physical exam.
- Do a regular breast self-exam (for example, once a month).
- Have a mammogram every two years.

### If you are over the age of 75...

- Have a yearly physical exam.
- Do a regular breast self-exam (for example, once a month).
- Ask your doctor about having a mammogram.

### What happens during the mammogram?

- A registered radiology technologist specializing in mammography will place your breast on a special x-ray machine?
- A plastic plate will be pressed down slowly to flatten your breast.
- You will feel some pressure on your breast for a few seconds during the x-ray.
- Usually, four pictures are taken – two of each breast.
- The technologist will check the pictures to make sure that they are good enough.

### WHAT SHOULD I DO THE DAY OF MY EXAM?

Wear a blouse, sweater or other two-piece outfit because you'll need to remove your clothing from the waist up. You may be asked to not use – or to wash off – deodorant, powder, perfume, ointment or cream above the waist. These substances can leave residues that can interfere with your results.

### HOW WELL DOES IT WORK?

Mammography is the most advanced, effective, accurate way to detect early breast cancer. As a result, mammography saves lives. However, because a small percentage of cancers and abnormalities may not be identified by mammography alone, you should also do monthly breast self-exams and see your doctor regularly for clinical breast exams.

### WHAT IS A BREAST SELF-EXAM AND WHEN SHOULD I DO IT?

A breast self-exam is a simple procedure for examining your own breasts for lumps or changes. You should perform such an exam every month, preferably seven to 10 days after the start of your menstrual cycle when your breasts are less tender or on the same date of each month if you are past menopause. Women who are breast-feeding should do their exam on the same day each month after nursing. If you ever detect a change in your breasts, contact your doctor. While most lumps are not cancerous, any lump needs medical evaluation.



### OTHER QUESTIONS?

If you have any concerns or questions, talk with your doctor or other health care provider. By playing an active role in your health care, you can make a difference.