

**A mammogram is a low-dose x-ray that creates an image of the breast. Mammography has been used to screen women for breast cancer for over 35 years. Read on to learn more about mammograms.**

### **Why should I have a mammogram?**

Mammograms assist with the early detection of breast cancer often finding lumps before they can be felt. Mammograms can also detect other changes to the breast tissue such as the development of microcalcifications (tiny deposits of calcium in the breast) that may detect breast cancer.

Studies show that screening with a mammogram reduces the number of deaths from breast cancer for women ages 40 – 69, especially for those over 50.

### **What is a screening mammogram?**

A screening mammogram is an x-ray of the breast used to detect breast changes in women who have no signs or symptoms of breast cancer. It usually involves two x-rays of each breast – one from above and one from the side.

### **What is a diagnostic mammogram?**

A diagnostic mammogram is a more detailed series of x-rays of the breast that is used to check for breast cancer after a lump or other sign or symptom of breast cancer has been found. It may also be used to evaluate changes found during a screening mammogram. It involves multiple views of the breasts from different angles.

### **When should I have my first mammogram?**

In the Cayman Islands it is recommended that a woman should have her first mammogram at the age of 40. Women age 40 and older should have mammograms every two (2) years or as recommended by her doctor.

Women who may be at high-risk for developing breast cancer should discuss with their doctor whether to have a mammogram before the age of 40.

### **What are the limitations of mammography?**

There is no screening test that is 100% accurate in the detection of cancer. False negatives can occur which means that a mammogram appears normal even though breast cancer is present. False positives can also occur when a radiologist interprets a mammogram as being abnormal but no cancer is present. There are also some types of breast cancer that cannot be detected by a mammogram.

### **When is the best time of the month to schedule an appointment for a mammogram?**

For women who still have a monthly period the best time to schedule a mammogram is in the week after your period when your breasts are likely to be less tender.

### **How do I prepare for a mammogram?**

If possible obtain prior mammograms and take them with you to the appointment. This is especially important if you are visiting a facility for the first time for a mammogram.

### **On the day of your mammogram:**

- Do not use any deodorant, antiperspirant, perfume, lotion or powder under your arms or on your breasts. These can appear as calcium spots on your mammogram image leading to more tests and a possible false positive result.
- Do not wear any jewelry as you will have to remove this.
- Wear a two-piece outfit as you will have to undress from the waist up.

### **What can I expect when I go for my appointment?**

Mammograms are performed on an out-patient basis meaning you are not required to stay in hospital overnight.

- You will be asked to undress from the waist up and to remove any jewelry you may be wearing.
- The technician doing the mammogram will be the only person in the room with you. They will ask you a series of questions – be sure to tell him/her any breast symptoms or problems you may be experiencing. It is also important to tell them if you think you might be pregnant or if you have breast implants, biopsy clips etc.

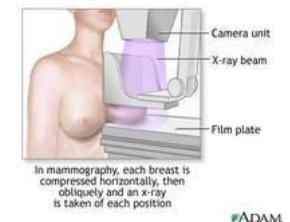
### **How is the procedure performed?**

The technologist will position your breast on a special platform. Another plastic plate will be lowered on top of your breast compressing it between the two plates and spreading the tissue. This will ensure that there is little movement and a sharper image.

You will be asked to hold your breath and remain still during the compression phase. You may experience some discomfort or pain but this lasts for a few seconds only. This process is usually repeated a total of four times during a screening mammogram.

The technologist will either be behind a special screen or in another room when the image is being captured.

When the mammogram is complete, you will be asked to wait a few moments while the quality of the image is determined.



#ADAM

### **Who interprets the results?**

The mammogram images are “read” by a radiologist who is a doctor trained to interpret imaging studies. A report will be sent to your doctor.

### **Are there different types of mammograms?**

The actual mammogram machine looks similar but there are two different types of technology used for mammograms.

The traditional mammogram stores the image on film. This is developed and viewed on a view box. Digital mammogram is a system in which a digital image is produced similar to the image produced by a digital camera and can be seen on a computer screen.

## **Is digital mammography better?**

Digital mammography is as effective as traditional mammography at detecting breast cancer in the general population of women. It may be more effective for women:

- With dense breasts  
breast exam performed by a medical practitioner on a yearly basis.
- Who are pre-menopausal
- Who are under the age of 50.

## **What are the advantages of digital mammography?**

- Images can be adjusted in a manner similar to the way in which digital camera images can be adjusted.
- Images can also be transmitted electronically to a doctor or another facility.
- Subtle differences between abnormal and normal tissue may be detected more easily.
- The number of follow-up procedures is fewer.
- There are fewer repeat images and call-backs reducing exposure to radiation.
- The overall time for the procedure is less.

## **What is computer-aided detection (CAD)?**

CAD uses special software to read a digital image and look for abnormal areas. These areas are then highlighted and the radiologist is alerted to analyze them further.

## **What should women with breast implants do about screening mammograms?**

Women with breast implants should have a mammogram. However, when making the appointment and again when you go to your

appointment it is important that you inform the facility that you have implants as they can hide some breast tissue. However steps can be taken if the technologist is aware that the woman has implants.

## **What if I think I am pregnant?**

If you think you are pregnant inform the technologist prior to having the mammogram done.

## **Where can I get a mammogram in Cayman?**

There are three places in the Cayman Islands where a woman can have a mammogram. These facilities are:  
The Cayman Islands Hospital  
Chrissie Tomlinson Memorial Hospital  
Medlab

## **What if I cannot afford a mammogram?**

If your health insurance does not provide coverage for a mammogram and you cannot afford one you can contact a member of the Lions Club of Tropical Gardens or the Cayman Islands Cancer Society who will provide you with a voucher for a free mammogram. There will be a form for you to complete and instructions on how to make the appointment for the mammogram.

## **Are there other methods of detecting breast cancer?**

There are non-imaging ways of detecting breast cancer including breast self-examination which should be performed by a woman on a monthly basis and a clinical breast exam which a woman should ask a doctor to do for her once a year.

These are an important part of maintaining breast health.

There are also other imaging studies that your doctor might order including ultrasound and MRI.

## **Contact us**

For more information on our programs and the Society, we invite you to visit our office in between the hours of 9am and 4pm,  
Monday – Friday.

## **Cayman Islands Cancer Society**

114 Maple Road · George Town  
P.O. Box 10565 ·  
Grand Cayman KY1-1005  
Cayman Islands

T. 345-949-7618 · F. 345-949-8694  
E. [info@cics.ky](mailto:info@cics.ky) · W. [www.cics.ky](http://www.cics.ky)



# **Mammograms**

## **What you need to know**