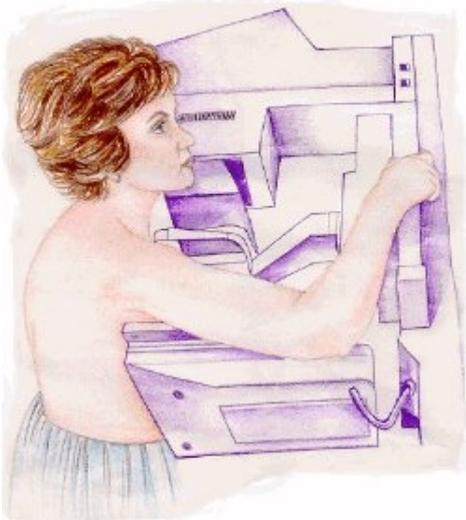


Women's Cancer Information Project

Coordinated by the European Institute of Women's Health

Mammography



Mammography is the process of taking an x-ray of the breast using a specially designed x-ray camera. It is used to detect tumours and cysts to help differentiate between benign and malignant tumours.

How is the test done?

When you attend for a mammogram, you will be asked to undress from the waist up, and you will then be given a gown to wear. Depending on the type of machine, you will have to either sit or stand. One breast at a time is rested on a flat surface that contains the x-ray plate. A device called a depressor will be pressed gently against the breast to flatten it slightly. This helps to improve the x-ray image. X-ray pictures are then taken from various different angles. You may have to hold your breath while the picture is being taken.

Is it uncomfortable?

During the test you may feel some discomfort, but very rarely do you feel actual pain.

What are the risks?

The level of radiation is low, and any associated risk is very low. Let your doctor or radiologist know if you are pregnant. If this is the case, your abdominal region will be shielded by a lead apron.

How often should you have a mammogram?

This depends on your age, your family history, and whether you have had problems in the past. Discuss having a mammogram with your family doctor. It is not usual for younger women to have mammograms, as older women's breast tissue is mainly fatty tissue, and a mammogram works better with fatty tissue.
