

What is screening?

Screening is a test used to find a disease (such as breast cancer) in a person without symptoms.

Breast cancer screening tests

Mammogram — A mammogram is the best screening tool used today to find breast cancer.

- It uses X-rays to create an image of the breast.
- It can be stored on a computer (digital mammography). These images can be lightened or darkened, and certain sections can be enlarged and looked at more closely.
- It can find breast cancer early when it is small, before it can be felt and the chances of survival are highest.

Clinical breast exam (CBE) — A CBE is done by a doctor or nurse who checks your breasts and underarm areas for any lumps or changes. It is often part of your regular medical check-up. If not, ask about it.

As new screening tools are developed and we learn more about risk, we may learn who will benefit most from any given screening test. Today, there are screening guidelines for those at average risk and different guidelines for those at higher risk. Women should discuss their risk of breast cancer and their screening options with a doctor.

Know what is normal for you

The signs of breast cancer are not the same for all women.

Early detection

Even if you feel healthy now, just being a woman and getting older puts you at risk of breast cancer. Finding breast cancer early may save your life.

It is important to know how your breasts normally look and feel. Many women find their breasts feel lumpy. Breast tissue often has a bumpy texture that varies from one woman to another. For some, the lumpiness is more obvious than for others. In most cases, this is no cause to worry. If the lumpiness can be felt throughout the breast and feels like your other breast, it is likely just normal breast tissue.

Lumps that feel harder or different from the rest of the breast tissue (or the tissue of the other breast) or that feel like a change are a concern. If you feel or see any change in your breasts or underarms, see a doctor.



Questions to ask

Talk with a doctor about your risk of breast cancer.

Discuss which screening tests are right for you.

Here are some questions you might want to ask:

1. What are the risks and benefits of screening mammography?
2. Would I benefit from getting a mammogram?
3. When do you suggest I start getting mammograms?
4. How often would you advise me to get a mammogram?
5. Where can I get a mammogram?
6. What if I cannot afford a mammogram?
7. Would you advise me to get a clinical breast exam?
8. Am I at higher risk for breast cancer? Do I need other screening tests?
9. If my mammogram shows that I have dense breasts, are there other tests I should get?

Resources

You can get information about mammograms and clinical breast exams by contacting the organizations listed below.

Susan G. Komen®

1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)

www.komen.org

American Cancer Society

1-800-ACS-2345

www.cancer.org

National Cancer Institute's Cancer

Information Service

1-800-4-CANCER

www.cancer.gov



Got a smartphone?
Scan here to view the
warning signs of breast
cancer at komen.org

Signs you should not ignore

Be aware of any change in your breast or underarm area. If you notice any of these signs, see a doctor.

- Lump, hard knot or thickening inside the breast or underarm area
- Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast
- Change in the size or shape of the breast
- Dimpling or puckering of the skin
- Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
- Pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast
- Nipple discharge that starts suddenly
- New pain in one spot that does not go away

Related fact sheets in this series:

- Benign Breast Conditions
- Breast Cancer Density
- Breast Cancer Risk Factors
- Mammography
- When You Discover a Lump or Change

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