



22nd October is National Mammography Day

Screening mammograms are recommended for all women without breast symptoms over the age of 40 on a yearly basis.

A mammogram is an X-ray image of your breast used to screen for breast cancer. Mammograms play a key role in early breast cancer detection and help decrease breast cancer deaths.

During a mammogram, your breasts are compressed between two firm surfaces to spread out the breast tissue. Then an X-ray captures black-and-white images of your breasts that are displayed on a computer screen and examined by a doctor who looks for signs of cancer. A mammogram can be used either for screening or for diagnostic purposes. How often you should have a mammogram depends on your age and your risk of breast cancer.

Why it's done?

Mammography is X-ray imaging of your breasts designed to detect tumors and other abnormalities. Mammography can be used either for screening or for diagnostic purposes in evaluating a breast lump:

- ✚ **Screening mammography.** Screening mammography is used to detect breast changes in women who have no signs or symptoms or observable breast abnormalities.
- ✚ **Diagnostic mammography.** Diagnostic mammography is used to investigate suspicious breast changes, such as a breast lump, breast pain, an unusual skin appearance, nipple thickening or nipple discharge.

When to begin screening mammography?

Some general guidelines for when to begin screening mammography include:

- ✚ Women with an average risk of breast cancer. Many women begin mammograms at age 40 and have them every one to two years.
- ✚ Women with a high risk of breast cancer. Women with a high risk of breast cancer may benefit by beginning screening mammograms before age 40. Your risk factors, such as a family history of breast cancer, may lead your doctor to recommend magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) in combination with mammograms.

Results:

Mammography produces mammograms — black-and-white images of your breast tissue.

Possible findings include:

- ✚ Calcium deposits (calcifications) in ducts and other tissues.
- ✚ Masses or lumps.
- ✚ Distorted tissues.
- ✚ Dense areas appearing in only one breast or one specific area on the mammogram.
- ✚ New dense area that has appeared since your last mammogram.

What happens if the mammogram is normal?

Continue to get regular mammograms. Mammograms work best when they can be compared with previous ones. This allows your doctor to compare them to look for changes in your breasts.

What happens if the mammogram is abnormal?

If it is abnormal, do not panic. An abnormal mammogram does not always mean that there is cancer. But you will need to have additional mammograms, tests, or exams before the doctor can tell for sure. You may also be referred to a breast specialist or a surgeon. It does not necessarily mean you have cancer or need surgery. These doctors are experts in diagnosing breast problems.

A radiology doctor (radiologist) may see the following types of findings on a mammogram:

-  A well-outlined, regular, clear spot (this is more likely to be a noncancerous condition such as a cyst).
-  Masses or lumps.
-  Dense areas in the breast that can be breast cancer or hide breast cancer.
-  Calcifications, which are caused by tiny deposits of calcium in the breast tissue (most calcifications are not a sign of cancer).

When mammogram or ultrasound results look suspicious, a biopsy is done to test the tissue and see if it is cancerous. Types of biopsies include:

-  Stereotactic.
-  Ultrasound.
-  Open.

Reference Links:

-  <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0003859/>
-  <http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/mammogram/>
-  <http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/mammogram/basics/results/prc-20012723>

For any enquiry or assistance please contact: wellness@medicaretpa.co.in

Disclaimer: No information contained here should be relied on in making health decisions. Always check with your doctor or other health care provider.