

What to Expect During Your Mammogram



The Breast Care Center
at Monongahela Valley Hospital

Putting **your** health first.



Your physician prescribed a mammogram. **You have questions. We have answers.**

At the Breast Care Center at Monongahela Valley Hospital, we know that it can be stressful to have a mammogram. “Will it hurt? Will I have to wait long for the results? What if they find something?” These are all questions that we hear frequently — and very real fears and concerns. However, mammograms are one of the best tools available to detect breast cancer early; and, the earlier that it is found, the better the chance for survival.

So the answers to the questions above are as follows. A mammogram may hurt just a little depending on a person’s threshold for pain — it can be described more as a discomfort. Most people do not have to wait long for the results; in many instances same-day results are available. Finally, women should not allow fear of a breast cancer diagnosis to keep them from having regular mammograms because mammograms help save lives. In fact, the American Cancer Society reports that only 2 to 4 screening mammograms of every 1,000 lead to a diagnosis of cancer.



What should you expect before, during and after your mammogram?

It is best to schedule your mammogram for the week after your menstrual period.

At this time, the breasts are generally not swollen or tender which means that there will be less discomfort. Less swelling also means that the X-ray will yield a clearer image.

However, don't worry if your mammogram falls during a different time of the month; we will be gentle.

In terms of clothing, a two-piece outfit such as a top and slacks is recommended because the clothing above the waist will be removed.

Also, deodorant, antiperspirant, powder and lotions should not be applied to the upper body on the day of the test because they can appear as spots on the X-ray.



What happens when you arrive at the Center?

The Breast Care Center at Monongahela Valley Hospital offers a relaxing atmosphere that is built on dignity and respect.

When you arrive at the Center, you will enter the main lobby of the hospital and go directly to *Outpatient Registration*, which is located past the Welcome Desk to the left. You will be asked to present your mammogram prescription, a form of identification and your insurance card.

Once you have registered, you will proceed to the Breast Care Center.



During your first visit to the Center, a member of the health care team will perform a breast cancer risk assessment to help determine your risk of developing breast cancer.

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Genetic Testing is usually a three-step process.

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What happens during a mammogram?

Following the assessment, a member of the care team will explain the mammogram procedure to you and answer any questions that you may have about the procedure.

You will be asked to undress from the waist up removing all clothing and jewelry that may interfere with the procedure. A gown will be provided and it should be worn with the opening in the front.

A technologist will escort you into a private room to perform the mammogram. You will stand in front of the mammography machine. She will position your breast on a plate on the unit and gently lower a top plate to compress the breast while the X-ray image is taken. You will be asked to hold your breath while the X-ray is taken. The technologist will stand in the room or behind a glass window to operate the machine. The process takes only a few seconds. For screening mammograms, two views of each breast are taken. The technologist will reposition the breast before each new image is taken. After the images are taken, you may be asked to wait a few minutes while the films are examined to ensure that the images are clear and no additional views are necessary. If they need to take additional

images, there is usually no cause for alarm. You may have moved slightly while the X-ray was being taken and the image may be blurred. The entire procedure usually takes less than 30 minutes. You can then change back into your clothes and resume your daily activities.

How long will I have to wait for the results?

The Breast Care Center helps to reduce the anxiety that people may experience waiting for mammogram results. Our specialized, on-site radiologists review the breast images. By providing any prior mammogram films or digital images to the Breast Care Center, the radiologist will have the ability to use them for comparison in order to spot any abnormalities not previously present. Mammogram results are available within a few days.

When a mammogram reveals something that requires further examination through ultrasound or a breast biopsy, the Nurse Navigator will help arrange for the added testing. The goal is to make the results available as soon as possible after the procedure.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

Our Nurse Navigator is available to answer your questions. She can be reached at 724-258-1669.



What are the different types of mammograms?

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast that is used to detect and evaluate breast changes. There are different types of mammograms which are each described below.

Screening — A person who has no breast symptoms or signs of breast cancer is typically prescribed a screening mammogram. A screening mammogram can identify breast cancer when it is too small to be felt by a self-examination. This type of mammogram usually takes two X-ray views of each breast — from top to bottom and side to side. Those with larger breasts may need to have additional views taken to see all of the breast tissue. For approximately 6 to 8 percent of the people who have screening mammograms, abnormalities are found. A diagnostic mammogram, breast ultrasound or needle biopsy may be needed to identify the abnormality.

Diagnostic — A diagnostic mammogram, which also is an X-ray of the breast, is done for a different reason than a screening mammogram. People who have had previous breast problems or an abnormal area identified on a screening mammogram are typically prescribed diagnostic mammograms. Multiple X-rays may be taken to carefully study a particular area of the breast. A diagnostic mammogram may reveal that an area that appeared abnormal on a screening mammogram is actually normal. It could indicate that a biopsy is necessary to determine a diagnosis. Often, the additional evaluation will reveal that some people who have potential abnormalities on a screening mammogram will have nothing wrong with them. Some people may require advanced diagnostics such as an MRI-guided breast biopsy, stereotactic breast biopsy or ultrasound-guided breast biopsy.

Digital — A digital mammogram uses X-rays to produce images of the breast; but, unlike traditional mammograms that are recorded on film, they are recorded and stored on a computer. By having the ability to view them on computer monitors, physicians can adjust the image size, contrast and brightness to clearly focus on areas of concern. The images also can be transmitted electronically to other physicians for consultation.

3-D Tomosynthesis — Also called 3-D mammography, breast tomosynthesis uses advanced imaging to take multiple images of the breast and reconstruct them to create a three-dimensional view of the entire breast. Radiologists can see areas of concern from all angles.

Benefits include:

- Sharper images of dense breast tissue
- Early detection of smaller masses that may be hidden during a digital mammogram
- Greater accuracy in pinpointing size, shape and location of masses
- Fewer biopsies

Since all insurance plans differ, some do not cover 3-D mammography. It is important to check with your insurance carrier regarding coverage.

Helpful Guidelines

If possible, obtain any prior mammogram films or if they were performed digitally, have them made available to the radiologist prior to or at the time of your mammogram. They will be useful for the radiologist to use for comparison in order to spot any abnormalities not previously present.

Approximately 48 hours before your mammogram, remove caffeine from your diet. Caffeine, which is found in coffee, tea, soda and some energy drinks, can increase breast tissue tenderness and make the mammogram more uncomfortable.

If you have questions or concerns, ask the Nurse Navigator. Understanding what will take place during your mammogram will make you less nervous.

Be sure to describe any breast problems with the medical team before the mammogram is performed.

It is important to notify the care team of the following:

- If you are pregnant or suspect that you may be pregnant
- If you are taking any prescription or over-the-counter medications or herbal supplements
- If you have breast implants
- If you are breastfeeding

To reduce your discomfort during and after the mammogram, take an over-the-counter pain reliever that works for you such as ibuprofen, aspirin or acetaminophen one-to-two hours before your appointment.

Glossary

Radiation Technologist — A radiation technologist is specially trained in taking mammograms. He or she is the person who takes the actual X-rays.

Radiologist — A radiologist is a physician who has the skill and knowledge to read X-ray images to discover any abnormalities.

Nurse Navigator — A nurse navigator is a registered nurse who is specially trained to assist with every step of care. For patients diagnosed with breast cancer, the nurse navigator offers three stages of support:

- **Information about treatment** — when breast cancer is diagnosed, the nurse navigator helps to answer questions and coordinates care.
- **Screening and diagnostics** — the navigator helps explain procedures and results and offers breast health education.
- **Survivorship** — nurse navigators also provide education about maintaining health after treatment



Notes: _____

Questions I want to ask: _____

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