



# Women's Health: Mammograms

## *Still the best for early detection*

Mammography is the best available method to detect breast cancer in its earliest stage, which is approximately 1 to 3 years before a woman can feel a lump.

### Get the Facts

Mammography is a specific type of imaging that uses a low-dose x-ray system for examination of the breasts. It allows a radiologist to identify differences between a normal breast and one that may show signs of cancer.

### What to Expect

- You will be required to undress above the waist. The facility will provide a wrap for you to wear.
- A technologist will be present to position your breasts for the mammogram. You and the technologist will be the only persons present during the mammogram. Most technologists are women.
- The entire procedure takes about 20 minutes. The actual breast compression only lasts a few seconds.
- You may feel some discomfort when your

breasts are compressed, but you should not feel pain.

### When to Get One

Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast examination as part of a periodic health exam by a medical professional every three years. After age 40, women should have a breast exam by a health professional every year. NOTE: In November 2009, the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force came out with new recommendations stating that most women should not start mammograms before age 50, and that it's best for the tests to come every two years instead of annually. The risk of getting breast cancer does increase with age, so as long as a woman is in good health, she should continue getting routine mammograms. Young women at high risk for breast cancer should discuss with their doctors if earlier

screenings are necessary.

### Questions to Ask

The following are suggestions for ensuring you will receive a quality mammogram:

- Ask to see the FDA certificate issued to all facilities that meet high professional standards of safety and quality.
- Use a facility that either specializes in mammography or performs mammograms often.
- Bring a list of the places, dates of mammograms, biopsies, or other breast treatments you may have had before.



### Did you know...?

According to the American Cancer Society, mammograms can often detect breast cancer years before a woman can find a lump herself, and when the disease is caught at an early, localized stage, the 5-year survival rate is 97 percent!