



**U.S. Food & Drug  
Administration**

# Mammograms

**A mammogram is a low-dose x-ray picture of the breast.**

## **Why should I have one?**

**Mammograms can help save lives.** They are still the best way to screen for breast cancer. They can find breast lumps when they are too small for a woman or her doctor to feel.

Mammograms can not find all problems. So, every woman should work with her doctor to check her breasts. Call your doctor or clinic if you notice any change in your breasts like:

- a lump
- thickening
- liquid leaking from the nipple or changes in how the nipple look

## How is a mammogram done?

- You will need to take off your shirt and bra.
- You will stand in front of the x-ray machine.
- Your breast is placed on a small platform.
- A clear plastic plate presses down on the breast for a few seconds. Some women say the pressure feels uncomfortable, but most don't find it painful.
- The technologist will take several pictures of the breast.
- A specialist then looks at the x-ray pictures to see if there are any changes in the breast.

## How do I get my results?

You and your health care provider should get written results within 30 days after your mammogram.

- Call if you don't get your results. Don't assume that everything is normal.
- Ask for your mammogram. It can be saved on a CD. Keep it to compare with mammograms you get later.

## **What does the FDA do?**

The FDA certifies the places that give mammograms in the U.S. It's a law called the Mammography Quality Standards Act (MQSA). The FDA inspects the facilities and the people who work there.

## **How do I know if my place is certified?**

The FDA keeps a list of all certified places where you can get a mammogram like a:

- Doctor's Office
- Clinic
- Hospital
- X-ray Center
- Mobile Van

To find a certified site near you, go to the FDA website and put in your zip code:  
[www.fda.gov/findmammography](http://www.fda.gov/findmammography)



**You should also  
look for the FDA  
MQSA Certificate  
at your facility.**

## What is a digital mammogram?

Digital mammograms are called 2D or 3D. Digital mammograms use a computer along with x-rays to make and show breast pictures. These pictures are taken in the same way as a regular mammogram. Ask your facility to learn more.

# What else should I know before I get a mammogram?

- Do not wear deodorant, perfume, lotion or powder under your arm or on your breasts on the day of your exam. It might show up on the x-ray.
- Tell the clinic if you have breast implants when you make your appointment. They may need to take more pictures than a regular mammogram.
- Tell the clinic if you have physical disabilities that may make it hard for you to sit up, lift your arms or dress yourself. Also, let them know if you use a wheelchair or scooter.
- Talk with the staff about how they will handle issues of modesty that you may have due to your religion.



**This fact sheet was developed by the FDA Office of Women's Health.  
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[www.fda.gov/womens](http://www.fda.gov/womens)**