

# GET TO KNOW THE MAMMO MONSTER



## **Q What are the new breast cancer screening guidelines for 2024?**

**A** On April 30, 2024, the United States Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) updated their recommendations for breast cancer screening. They now recommend that all women get screened every other year starting at age 40 and continuing through age 74. If you have a family history or other risk factors, talk to your doctor about starting earlier.

## **Q Are breast self-exams still recommended?**

**A** No, routine breast self-exams are no longer widely recommended. Research shows they don't significantly reduce breast cancer deaths. Instead, being "breast self-aware" is encouraged. This means knowing how your breasts normally look and feel so you can report any changes to your doctor.

## **Q Can men get breast cancer? Should they be screened?**

**A** Yes, men can get breast cancer, though it's rare. Men with a family history or genetic predisposition should discuss screening with their doctor. Look for symptoms like lumps or changes in the chest area.

## **Q Are mammograms painful?**

**A** Most people describe it as mildly uncomfortable, but it only lasts a few seconds. Communicate with your technologist if you're nervous — they'll help make the process as comfortable as possible.

## **Q How often should I get a mammogram?**

**A** Annual mammograms are recommended starting at age 40. If you're at a higher risk, your doctor may recommend a different schedule.

## **Q What if I have dense breasts?**

**A** Dense breast tissue can make it harder to spot abnormalities. Additional screening methods like 3D mammograms or breast ultrasounds may be recommended, and in some cases, a breast MRI might be suggested for further evaluation. Talk to your doctor to determine the best option for you.

Q **Do mammograms work for all breast sizes?**

A Yes! Mammograms are effective for all breast sizes. The machine adjusts to ensure clear images, whether your breasts are large or small.

Q **What's the difference between 2D and 3D mammograms?**

A 2D mammograms capture two flat images, while 3D mammograms (tomosynthesis) create a series of detailed images for better visibility, especially in dense breast tissue.

Q **What should I avoid before a mammogram?**

A Skip deodorants, powders, or lotions under your arms or on your chest. These can appear on the images and cause confusion. Also, try to schedule your mammogram when your breasts are less tender (like after your period).

Q **How long does a mammogram take?**

A The entire process usually takes about 20 minutes, with the actual imaging lasting only a few seconds.

Q **What happens if my mammogram shows something abnormal?**

A Don't panic! An abnormal result doesn't always mean cancer. Additional tests, such as an ultrasound or biopsy, may be needed to get more information.

Q **Is there anything I can do to reduce my risk of breast cancer?**

A While some risk factors like age and genetics can't be changed, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, exercising regularly, limiting alcohol, and avoiding smoking can help lower your risk.

Q **How can I support someone going through breast cancer screening or treatment?**

A Be a listening ear, accompany them to appointments, or help with tasks like childcare or meal prep. Small gestures go a long way.