

We are thrilled to provide 3D mammography to our community. The information below will help you better understand 3D mammography and answer any questions you may have.

**What is 3D mammography?** Digital breast tomosynthesis (tomo), also known as 3D mammography, is a revolutionary new screening and diagnostic breast imaging tool to improve the early detection of breast cancer. During the 3D part of the exam, an x-ray arm sweeps over the breast, taking multiple images in seconds. Images are displayed as a series of thin slices that can be viewed by our radiologists as individual images or in a dynamic interactive animation. Approved as an imaging modality by the FDA in early 2011, 3D mammography is used in combination with 2D digital mammography.

**What are the benefits of using 3D mammography?** Many studies in Europe and the U.S. have substantiated superior breast cancer detection rates when combining 3D mammography with conventional 2D mammography. Studies have demonstrated a 10%-30% increase in overall breast cancer detection (over 2D imaging alone). **This ability to detect breast cancer at an earlier stage could save more lives.** Two of the top benefits are improving the early detection of breast cancer and providing peace of mind due to greater clarity and accuracy. This increased accuracy reduces the number of call-backs (by as much as 30%), sparing women the anxiety, inconvenience and expense of coming back for further imaging. However, please keep in mind it does not eliminate all call backs.

**How is 3D mammography different than 2D?** Traditional digital mammography takes two-dimensional pictures of the breast and is still one of the most advanced tools available for detecting breast abnormalities. But, rather than viewing the breast tissue in 2D images, our radiologists can examine the tissue one thin layer at a time, in a sense traveling through the structure of the breast like flipping pages of a book. Fine details are more visible and are less likely to be hidden by overlapping tissue.

**Do patients need a referral for a 3D mammogram?** You physician's referral for your routine screening mammogram or diagnostic mammogram is all we need to perform the 3D mammogram, no additional or separate order is needed.

**Is there increased radiation with 3D mammography?** 3D mammography is safe. Radiation exposure to the breast is very low. The radiation dose for a combined 2D/3D mammography exam is well below the acceptable limits defined by the FDA, and is only a fraction of the level of radiation everyone receives annually from the natural background of being outdoors. There is no evidence that this low level of radiation has any significant effect on the breasts.

**Is 3D mammography available to all patients?** Yes, 3D mammography is available to all patients for screening and diagnostic mammograms.

**What can patients expect during a 3D mammogram?** 3D mammography complements standard 2D mammography. No additional breast compression is required and it only takes a few more seconds. The experience will be very similar to mammograms patients have had in the past. As is typical with any mammogram exam, some women may experience minor discomfort and others experience no discomfort at all.

**With 3D mammography, do women still need an annual screening mammogram?** **Yes. All women are at risk for breast cancer, regardless of symptoms or family history.** Mammograms often can detect potential problems before they can be felt. Early detection greatly increases treatment options and the likelihood of successful recovery. Although 2D/3D combination exams have been proven to detect more cancers, the breast center continues to recommend that women 40 and older receive a routine screening mammogram every year.

**Why do women still need an annual mammogram when 3D has an improved cancer detection rate?** Breast cancer is the most diagnosed cancer in women, affecting one in every eight women in the U.S. The goal of screening exams is to identify breast abnormalities as early as possible, facilitate early cancer detection, and thereby provide patients with more treatment options and a better chance for survival. Yearly mammography will help detect subtle new findings. Women whose breast cancer is detected at an early stage have a 93 percent or more survival rate in the first five years.

**Is 3D mammography safe for women with breast implants?** Yes. Mammography, both 2D and 3D, is safe for women with breast implants. Most breast implants are designed to withstand hundreds of pounds of pressure. A mammogram generates an average of 20 lbs. of pressure.

**Is 3D mammography covered by insurance? How much does it cost?** 3D mammography is not yet covered by most insurance companies, other than Medicare and Medicaid. If your insurance does not cover the 3D Mammogram there will be a small fee assessed that you will be responsible for in addition to the fee to the radiologist to interpret the exam. You may be able to pay this with your flexible spending account.