

LANCASTER RADIOLOGY ASSOCIATES, LTD.

MAMMOGRAPHY

What it is:

Mammography is a type of diagnostic imaging that uses low-dose X-Rays for examination of the breast to identify tumors and cysts. It is used for early detection of breast cancer and to examine other breast complaints, and has been proven to reduce mortality rates from breast cancer.

What you need to know:

A typical mammography procedure takes about half an hour. A specialized Diagnostic Radiology (X-Ray) procedure is used to take two images of each breast. To obtain these images, the breast is placed on a special platform that holds the X-Ray cassette. Gradual compression is applied to the breast with a soft plastic paddle, with the degree of compression monitored by a technologist.

On occasion, patients experience mild aching after an exam. This can be relieved by over-the-counter analgesics as aspirin or Tylenol, which you can take if you are not allergic to these medications. Also, some women may experience mild skin discoloration after the exam, which is only temporary. It is important to realize that the compression experienced during the exam does not damage the breast tissue, and is not dangerous for your breasts. On the contrary, breast compression allows imaging the breast with the greatest clarity possible at the least radiation dose.

The radiation dose to your breasts during mammography is closely monitored and kept at the minimum possible levels at all times. The total radiation exposure experienced during a two view mammogram is equivalent to six months of natural background exposure which we each experience every day. This is considered to be an acceptable and safe level, given the overwhelming benefit received from a carefully performed and interpreted mammogram.

How to prepare:

Do not use apply deodorant, cream or powder in the underarm or breast area prior to the examination, as these can cause artificial dense areas on the film. Wear a two piece outfit so that only the top needs to be removed for the exam. To minimize any potential discomfort during a mammogram, it is best to avoid having the procedure during, or up to a week prior to your examination, especially if you normally experience tenderness of the breast during this time.

If you have had mammograms performed at another facility prior to this examination, obtain these films and bring them in at the time of your mammogram for comparison purposes. Please also discuss any breast related problems or symptoms with the technologist prior to starting your exam, and always inform the technologist if you think you might be pregnant.