

Take the time

FOR YOUR PEACE OF MIND.



Your mammogram

A mammogram is an X-ray test of the breasts used to screen for breast problems, such as lumps, which may be cancerous.

One out of every eight women will develop breast cancer in her life. A mammogram can detect tiny changes in the breast tissue, usually before they can be felt by hand and before symptoms are present. By detecting cancer early on, the disease is much easier to treat—and beat.

Women 40 and older should have a mammogram every one to two years. If you have other risk factors, such as a mother, sister, or daughter with breast cancer, it's a good idea to get screened every year. Be sure to talk to your doctor about what's right for you.

How to prepare

To make sure your mammogram goes smoothly:

- Wear clothing that will allow you to easily undress from the waist up.
- Don't wear lotions, powders, perfumes, or deodorants, which may interfere with the test.
- If you've had a mammogram before, but at a non-Kaiser Permanente facility, bring your results with you.

Some women may find a mammogram to be uncomfortable. To help ease discomfort:

- Make your appointment for one to two weeks after your period.
- Cut down on or eliminate caffeine three to five days before your appointment.
- Take ibuprofen two hours before your appointment.

What to expect

When you go for your test, you'll be given a gown to wear and asked to undress from the waist up. A technician—all our mammography technicians are female—will place your breast between two X-ray panels to even out the tissue and ensure a clear picture. Though you may feel some mild discomfort, each X-ray will take less than one minute. Also, be sure to tell your mammography technician if you:

- Have a pacemaker.
- Are pregnant or think you may be pregnant.
- Are experiencing any breast problems or symptoms.

Myths and facts about mammograms

“I’m not at risk for breast cancer.”

Simply being a woman and getting older means you’re at risk for breast cancer. Seventy-five percent of women diagnosed with breast cancer have no family history. The good news is that early detection makes treating breast cancer much easier. Your best bet is to be sure you get regular clinical breast exams and mammograms.

“My breasts are too small to get a mammogram.”

Our mammography technicians are trained and have experience in working with body types of all shapes and sizes.

“A mammogram will damage my pacemaker.”

Mammograms will not hurt your pacemaker. Just make sure to let the mammography technician know that you have one before you begin.

“The radiation exposure from a mammogram could be dangerous.”

Mammograms use a very low level of radiation that does not significantly increase your risk of breast cancer. For example, according to the American Cancer Society, one mammogram gives off roughly the same amount of radiation you would get flying from New York to California on a jet plane.

“I don’t have time for a mammogram.”

We know how it is. These days, everyone’s busy. But getting regular mammograms is important. So make an appointment today. It’s something good you can do for yourself—and for everyone who loves you, too.

How to schedule a mammogram

Call our Appointment and Advice Line at **(650) 299-2015** or **1-800-735-2922** (TTY for the hearing/speech impaired).

To learn more:

- Talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Visit us online at kp.org to search our health encyclopedia and read articles on women’s health.
- Read the Women’s Health section of your *Healthwise® Handbook*.
- Call the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone at **1-800-332-7563**. For a list of health topics and codes, call Health Education at **(650) 299-2433** and request a *Kaiser Permanente Healthphone Directory*, or you can download an English/Spanish directory of topics online on our Web site at members.kaiserpermanente.org. Search for “Kaiser Permanente Healthphone.”