

Breast cancer is a common cancer in women. Fortunately, great progress has been made in detecting and treating breast cancer. The earlier breast cancer can be detected, the greater the chance for a cure. In fact, women who have small, localized breast cancers have an excellent chance of living many years after cancer treatment.

Mammography is the most valuable screening tool available for early detection of breast cancer. Although mammography does not detect all lesions (abnormal changes), it currently is the most accurate method. Mammography can save lives.

Risk factors

The risk of breast cancer increases as you get older. Most breast cancers occur in women over age 50, and the risk is especially high for women over age 60. You may have a higher risk for breast cancer if you have a personal history or a family history of breast cancer in a first-degree relative (mother, sister or daughter). A previous breast biopsy that was benign (non-life-threatening) but showed suspicious (questionable) cells also increases risk. Depending on your risk factors, your doctor may recommend more frequent screenings.

Breast cancer screening

Park Nicollet staff recommend that women of all ages follow standard breast cancer screening guidelines. Breast cancer screening includes monthly breast self-exams (BSEs), clinical breast exams performed by a doctor and mammograms.

Monthly breast self-exams

Monthly breast self-exams allow you to become familiar with the feel, shape and size of your breasts, making it easier to notice changes should they occur. Your doctor will show you how to do a BSE. Call your doctor if you observe the following:

- New lumps or changes in the size or shape of existing lumps
- Change in the shape or contour of a breast or unusual swelling
- Change in skin color or texture

- Dimpling, puckering, crusting or rash in the skin, especially around the nipple
- Any discharge from the nipple

Clinical breast exams

Clinical breast exams, when combined with a mammogram, are the best way to detect cancer in its early stages. Many doctors perform routine breast exams for women during office visits. Using the flat part of his or her fingers, your doctor will check each breast for lumps and look for other suspicious changes.

Mammograms

Mammograms can reveal breast cancers when they are still very small, sometimes two years earlier than a woman or her doctor can feel them. Use the following guidelines to schedule your screenings.

Recommendations for breast cancer screening

Screening	Age in years			
	20–39	40–49	50–75	76 or older
Breast self-exam	monthly	monthly	monthly	monthly
Clinical breast exam by a doctor	every three years	yearly	yearly	yearly
Mammogram		yearly, depending on your health history or preference	yearly	determined by patient and doctor preference

Mammography

A mammogram is an exam in which a low dose of radiation (an X-ray) is passed through the compressed (flattened) breast. Compression of the breast tissue is needed to get the highest quality image. Compression is not dangerous to your breast tissue. Any mild discomfort should be temporary.

Preparing for your mammogram

When preparing for your mammogram, do not use powder, deodorant or perfume on the underarm area or breast. Washing with soap and water is acceptable.

Allow 30 minutes for your appointment, about 20 minutes for the mammogram. An exam may last longer if more images are needed.

If you have had a mammogram at another facility, Park Nicollet Health Services may need those images for comparison. You will be asked to sign a release form to have those images sent to Park Nicollet Health Services.

What to expect at your visit

Screening mammograms are for patients who have no symptoms. A radiologist does not view the mammogram before you leave your appointment. Occasionally, the radiologist needs to clarify findings on the mammogram. You may be asked to return soon after your initial screening for additional images or procedures. A follow-up exam may be scheduled three to six months after your mammogram. Follow-up is common and does not necessarily mean cancer is suspected.

Diagnostic mammograms are scheduled for patients who have known abnormalities or conditions, such as a lump, dimpling or nipple discharge. Diagnostic mammograms also are used for the first year following breast cancer diagnosis or breast surgery. A radiologist reviews the mammogram before you leave the appointment, reducing the chance of being called back for additional images.

Scheduling your mammogram

To schedule an appointment, call one of the following offices. Please also call if you need to cancel or reschedule your appointment. Refer to the phone numbers listed below.

Radiology Call Center (for all clinic sites)
952-993-9800

Jane Brattain Breast Center—St. Louis Park
952-993-3700

Jane Brattain Breast Center—Wayzata
952-993-8216

Appointment information

Date _____

Time _____

Location _____

Receiving your test results

You and your doctor will receive your mammography results from your clinic within 10 days of your exam. If you have any questions about your exam, please call your doctor.

Providing quality mammography

Every year, Park Nicollet professionals perform thousands of mammography exams. Staff members continually take steps to provide quality mammography services.

These steps include:

- Using state-of-the-art equipment to guarantee the highest quality mammogram, including full-field digital mammography and computer-aided detection.
- Accrediting all eight mammography departments each year through the American College of Radiology. This means these departments meet the highest quality mammography standards to provide the best mammography services possible.
- Registering all mammography technologists with the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists. Technologists also attend continuing education classes in mammography.

If you want more information on any medical topic, please contact the Park Nicollet Health Library. A medical librarian can help you find out what you need to know.

Web site: parknicollet.com/healthlibrary

E-mail: library@parknicollet.com

Phone: 952-993-5011

This brochure is based on guidelines developed by a team of health care experts at the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (ICSI), of which Park Nicollet Health Services is an active member. It is reviewed and updated regularly as scientific evidence changes. This material is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Mammography and Breast Cancer Screening