Making the best decision for your personal health

The first step in making a decision about early detection mammography screening is to know your individual risk for developing breast cancer. Your provider can help you identify your personal risk factors for breast cancer by reviewing the following:

- Family history for breast, ovarian, endometrial, uterine, prostate, colon, pancreatic and thyroid cancer
- Personal history for cancer
- Elevated breast density score (C or D)
- Personal or family genetic mutation
- Previous breast biopsy with atypia

Starting the conversation

Based on your individual risk, your healthcare provider will be able to determine what preventive cancer screening is best for you, the frequency of screening and if you might benefit from genetic testing.

Discuss with your healthcare provider:

- Your personal values and preferences.
- Possible factors that may influence your decision-making:
  - Financial
  - Time away from work
  - Transportation
  - Child care
  - Fear
- Are there additional screenings that I should get based on my risk?

For more information, visit **summahealth.org/breast**.

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What breast cancer screening is right for you?

This information can help you decide if early detection screening for breast cancer is the best choice for your health. After reviewing the potential benefits and harms of breast cancer screening, talk to your provider to make a shared decision about which option is the best fit for your preferences.

What is early detection of breast cancer?

Early detection of breast cancer, also called screening, is used to detect breast cancer at a very early stage, before it causes symptoms. In this initial stage, cancer is easier to treat and the chances of survival are higher.

You should inform yourself of the pros and cons of early detection screening and talk to your provider about the best option for your health.

Current screening guidelines

Screening guidelines can be confusing. Experts may disagree on what age to begin getting a mammogram, how often to be screened and when to stop mammograms. No screening test is perfect. Talk to your provider about the benefits/harms of screening.

Summa Health recommends:

- Starting at 21 years old: clinical breast exam every 3 years
- Starting at 40 years old: clinical breast exam every year
- Females should have the choice to begin screening at age 40 and should have an annual mammogram and clinical breast exam by age 45. Those with lifetime risk > 20% or family history may choose to begin at 35.

Potential benefits of mammography screening for breast cancer

Screening reduces the risk of dying of breast cancer

Early detection can save some female's lives because they are diagnosed and treated before they would have been without screening.

Screening detects cancer earlier

Cancer detected in early stages requires less aggressive treatments and these treatments have fewer side effects and the likelihood of recovery is higher.

Screening mammogram is a proven test for early detection in finding a breast cancer

Many females wait until they experience symptoms, like a lump, before they get a mammogram or clinical breast exam. By then, the cancer may have spread and be more difficult to treat and cure. A mammogram can detect cancer before there is a lump.

Ease of mind

Having a mammogram may help you feel good about your decisions to have preventive screenings.

Potential risks of mammography screening for breast cancer

Errors in diagnosis: false positives and false negatives

- False positives occur when mammography results suggest a possible breast cancer that does not really exist. This entails additional procedures that would not be necessary.
- The opposite, a false negative, is much less frequent and occurs when a mammogram does not show any signs of the disease, even if the female suffers it.

Screening can detect harmless tumors

Some types of cancer that are detected by screening mammography grow so slowly that they would never become a health problem. Therefore, some females may receive treatments that have important side effects, without needing them. This is known as over diagnosis and over treatment.