

Mammography

Questions & Answers

Anne Arundel Diagnostics – A Designated Breast Imaging Center of Excellence, American College of Radiology



For appointments, call our central scheduling office at **1-888-909-XRAY (9729)**.

Sites offering mammography services:

AAD Breast Imaging Center
2002 Medical Parkway
Sajak Pavilion, Suite 120
Annapolis, MD 21401
(443) 481-5660

Anne Arundel Diagnostics – Bowie
AAMC Health Services – Bowie
4175 N. Hanson Ct.,
Suite 102
Bowie, MD 20716
(301) 464-0798
(443) 481-3260

Anne Arundel Diagnostics – Kent Island
AAMC Health Services – Kent Island
1630 Main Street, Suite 104
Chester, MD 21619
(410) 604-2000
(410) 604-2009

Shipley's Imaging Center
8601 Veterans Highway, Suite 100
Millersville, MD 21108
(410) 729-4451

What is mammography?

Mammography is an X-ray examination of the breasts. A mammography exam, called a mammogram, is used to aid in the diagnosis and the early detection of breast cancer.

Is mammography harmful to me?

As in other X-ray examinations, radiation is used. However, mammography uses extremely low doses of radiation and when used as appropriately, does not pose significant risk to the patient.

Is the examination painful and how long does it take?

When the X-ray is taken, the breast must be compressed to get the best detail. Although this compression may be uncomfortable, it should not be painful and will last only seconds. The compression also reduces the radiation dose given to penetrate the tissue. Compression also prevents motion that may result in the need for additional and/or repeat views. Please arrive 10-15 minutes before your appointment time and allow 30 minutes for the exam.

What do I need to do to prepare for my mammogram?

Please do not wear underarm deodorant, powder or perfumes on the day of your exam, as they may produce film artifacts that mimic cancer. It may also be helpful to time your appointment to minimize pre-menstrual tenderness. If you had prior mammograms that were not done by Anne Arundel Diagnostics (AAD), please make arrangements to bring them with you or have them promptly sent to us. This is extremely important and allows us to compare your old films to your current exam. If you had prior mammograms performed locally, you may sign out films and bring them with you.

How often should mammograms be performed?

The American Cancer Society and most major medical organizations recommend women age

40 and older have a screening mammogram every year and continue to do so as long as they are in good health. Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam by a health professional every year. Women who are at high risk for breast cancer should talk with their doctor regarding the best approach to breast health. This may include having mammograms earlier than recommended or having more frequent clinical exams.

Are there different types of mammograms?

Yes, there are two types of mammograms – a screening mammogram and a diagnostic mammogram. A screening mammogram is performed for patients with no breast problems or abnormalities. A diagnostic mammogram is a tailored exam that is used to evaluate an area of abnormality, such as a new lump, skin or nipple retraction, unexplained skin or nipple rash, or nipple discharge.

Are all lumps in the breast bad?

No. In fact, most lumps are not. Many women at one time or another have lumps in their breasts. This is especially true of women in their childbearing years. However, a lump in the breast may be due to breast cancer. If you discover a lump in your breast, it is important that you inform your doctor so he/she can order the correct examination. In addition, you should share this information with the person performing the mammogram, so they can inform the radiologist.

What are breast calcifications?

As you age, breasts often develop calcium deposits called calcifications. These calcifications can be so tiny that they are usually not felt. The majority of breast calcifications do not

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represent cancer. However, mammography can detect some specific patterns of breast calcifications that may be formed by cancer.

Can a mammogram detect breast cancer before my physician or I can feel it?

Yes. Many breast cancers are first detected by mammography alone. Screening mammography can reduce mortality from breast cancer by approximately 20-35 percent in women aged 50-69 years old and by approximately 20 percent in women aged 40-49 years old.

My breast tissue is dense and lumpy. Will a mammogram detect any breast tissue abnormalities?

Some breast cancers cannot be seen on mammography. Dense and lumpy breast tissue is especially difficult to penetrate adequately with mammography. Recent studies have shown that digital mammogram is more effective in women with dense breast tissue. The secondary signs of malignancy may be detected in these breasts, but some masses will be obscured. That is the reason it is so important to perform breast self-examinations and to see your physician for regular breast examinations. Ask our mammographers for shower cards with directions on breast self-examinations and then hang the card in your shower as a reminder.

What if I can feel a lump in my breast but it is not seen on my mammogram?

Since not every breast cancer can be seen on a mammogram, any lump that can be felt must be examined by your physician whether or not it can be seen on a mammogram. Your physician will then determine and recommend the best possible diagnostic procedure.

How is digital mammography different from film mammography?

Digital mammography uses high-resolution photosensor plates to produce the digital mammographic image, while in film mammography, the image is created directly on film. While standard film mammography is very good, it is less sensitive for women who have dense breasts. Digital mammography also allows enhanced viewing and permanent electronic storage in a computer.

Do my breast implants affect the mammogram?

Yes. Extra views are usually needed to see the breast tissue around the implant and to evaluate the implant for any problems.

Why must some women return for extra mammograms?

The screening mammogram is not reviewed by the radiologist until after you leave. About 10 to 20 percent of the time, the radiologist will see an area that needs further evaluation. Please do not be too concerned if you are contacted by our staff to return for further evaluation. Most of the time, the extra exam only confirms benign findings.

Who interprets my mammogram?

Every mammogram is read by a radiologist — a physician trained in the interpretation of X-rays. All of our breast-imaging radiologists are board certified, with expertise in mammography.

Your mammogram report will be sent to the physician's office. A letter summarizing your results will also be mailed directly to you.

Is your mammography equipment accredited?

Yes. All of our mammography machines are accredited by the American College of Radiology and certified by the FDA. This means they meet the most stringent quality standards.

What is AAD's level of accreditation?

The AAD Breast Imaging Center is accredited in digital mammography, stereotactic breast biopsies, breast ultrasound and ultrasound-guided breast biopsies. In addition, Anne Arundel Diagnostics (AAD) had been named a Breast Imaging Center of Excellence by the American College of Radiology (ACR), the first in the state of Maryland to receive this honor. This designation is awarded to breast imaging centers that achieve excellence by seeking and earning accreditation in all of ACR's voluntary breast-imaging accreditation programs and modules, in addition to the mandatory Mammography Accreditation Program.

If you have other questions about mammography or breast disease, please talk to your doctor.