

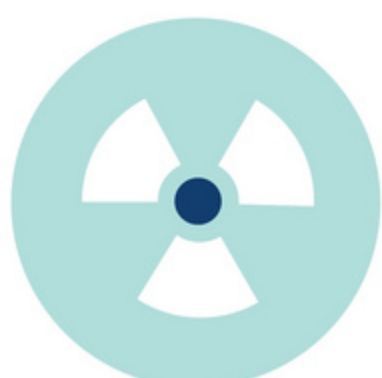
4 MAMMOGRAM MYTHS

Knowing the truth about mammograms could help save your life, or the life of someone you love. Over **60%** of breast cancer cases are diagnosed before they spread.^[1] Nearly **90%** of women who find and treat their breast cancer are cancer-free at five years.^[2] Mammograms can help reduce the number of deaths from breast cancer among women ages 40 to 70.^[3]



MYTH: Mammograms don't help.

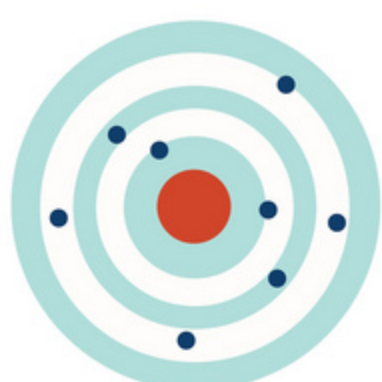
TRUTH: Regular mammograms are the best tests doctors have to find breast cancer early, sometimes up to three years before it can be felt.^[4]



MYTH: Mammograms cause cancer.

TRUTH: Mammograms utilize very small doses of radiation—it's like getting an x-ray.

The risk of harm is extremely low. Thanks to technology, radiation doses in mammography have consistently decreased with time while consistently increasing in accuracy.^[5] The benefits of detecting and treating something that is life-threatening far outweigh the extremely small potential of harm from radiation exposure.



MYTH: Mammograms are inaccurate.

TRUTH: Although they are not perfect, mammograms are the best tool we have in early detection.

Overall, when cancer is present, mammograms are about **80%** effective in identifying it. It is possible to get a false-negative result (when a mammogram misses a cancer that is present). Although this happens about **20%** of the time, repeated and regular screenings reduce this percentage.^[6] It is also possible to get a false positive result (when a mammogram indicates the presence of cancer where there is none present). These results usually require follow-up with additional testing and most women called back for this additional testing do not have cancer.



MYTH: Mammograms are painful.

TRUTH: Everyone's pain threshold is different, but the compression involved in a mammogram is more often described as temporary discomfort.

It's necessary to ensure that everything can be seen clearly on a mammogram. It could be unpleasant for a few moments, but it's a small tradeoff for living cancer-free, or catching breast cancer early and fighting it successfully. It may also help to know that your breasts may be more sensitive if you are about to get or have your period—so you may want to schedule your routine mammogram in the middle of your cycle.

Know before you go

Knowing how to prepare for your mammogram can help ease your mind and speed the process.



Don't wear deodorant, perfume, lotion or powder under your arms or on your breasts on the day of your exam. Foreign particles could show up in an x-ray.



Only get a mammogram at facilities certified by the FDA or one of its state counterparts. This ensures the staff is trained and you'll receive quality treatment. There were 8,675 MQSA-certified facilities as of April 2013, and 38,619,078 mammograms have been performed at these sites.^[7] You can find a site by visiting www.fda.gov/findmammography.



Let technologists and staff know if you have breast implants. They may need to take more pictures than a regular mammogram.



You have the right to a written report of the results within 30 days of receiving a mammogram, as well as the original mammogram x-ray pictures. Call if you don't get your results, don't assume everything is normal.



Bring prior mammograms or have them sent to the center if possible.



Tell the clinic if you have physical disabilities that may make it hard for you to sit up, lift your arms, or hold your breath.

The Food and Drug Administration Office of Women's Health works to protect and advance the health of women through policy, science, and outreach.

Learn more at www.fda.gov/womens



[1] Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER), National Cancer Institute. Data from 18 SEER regions from 2002-2008.

[2] American Cancer Society, Breast Cancer Facts & Figures, 2011-2012.

[3] Mandelblatt JS, Cronin KA, Bailey S, et al. Effects of mammography screening under different screening schedules: model estimates of potential benefits and harms. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 2009;151(10):738-747.

[4] Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2012.

[5] U.S. Food & Drug Administration. Trends in Mammography Dose and Image Quality, 1974-2009.

[6] National Cancer Institute, 2012.

[7] U.S. Food & Drug Administration, MQSA National Statistics, 2013.