



FACT SHEET

Niagara Health is pleased to provide you with general information about your upcoming exam.

WHAT IS DIAGNOSTIC MAMMOGRAPHY?

Mammography uses low-dose x-rays to take pictures of your breasts. The pictures are performed by Medical Radiation Technologists who are trained in mammography imaging. If you are between 40 and 74 years of age and have no breast symptoms or history of cancer, please schedule your mammogram appointment with the Ontario Breast Screening Program at your nearest hospital site.

WHAT IS MAMMOGRAPHY USED FOR?

Mammography is used to find early evidence of breast cancer.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR MY MAMMOGRAM?

Schedule your mammogram the week after your period. During your period your breasts may be tender. Do not wear deodorant, talcum powder or lotion under your arms or on your breasts on the day of the exam. These may show up as spots on your mammogram.

WHAT IF I COULD BE PREGNANT OR IF I AM BREASTFEEDING?

Please tell the Medical Radiation Technologist if it is possible that you are pregnant or if you are breastfeeding. If there is a possibility of pregnancy or if you are breastfeeding, the test may have to be delayed.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING TO MY APPOINTMENT?

Please bring your Ontario Health Card. If you have had a previous mammogram elsewhere, please bring it to your appointment for comparison. Please note that the Niagara Health System is a scent-free environment.

Describe any breast problems to the Medical Radiation Technologist.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE TEST?

You will be asked to remove all clothing from the waist up.

Describe any problems that you have with your breasts to the Medical Radiation Technologist before the mammogram.

Your breast is exposed to a small dose of radiation that will produce a picture of the tissue inside the breast. To do the mammogram, the Medical Radiation Technologist will place your breast on the mammography machine and put pressure on your breast with a clear plastic paddle. Two different pictures are taken of each breast. You may feel some discomfort when your breast is under pressure.

WHY IS PRESSURE ON MY BREAST NEEDED?

- To spread out the breast tissue so that small lesions can be seen.
- To hold the breast still for the best picture.

HOW LONG WILL THE MAMMOGRAM TAKE?

The exam will take 15 minutes.

IS THE RADIATION SAFE?

The radiation exposure is very low and poses little risk. The effective radiation dose you will receive is about the same as you receive from normal living every 3 months.

WHO REPORTS MY PICTURES?

The pictures are reported by specially trained doctors. The results are sent to your doctor. Do not assume that the results of your mammogram are normal. Call your doctor two weeks after you had your mammogram.

If the Radiologist sees something on the pictures, you may be asked to return for another type of test. If you have breast implants, four different pictures will be taken of each breast.

Note: not all breast cancers are seen on mammograms.