



What is Mammography?

Mammography is used to investigate women, referred by their Doctor, who have a family history of breast cancer, breast symptoms such as unusually painful breasts, new lumps felt, nipple discharge or patients breast post surgery, for example.

Mammography can often detect breast cancer years before a lump in the breast can be felt, and is capable of identifying breast cancers earlier than physical examinations alone.

How does it work?

At Direct Radiology, receiving a mammogram is an easy process. Our highly trained and compassionate female mammographer will work with you to take an X-Ray of each breast in multiple views while the breast is held firmly by a compression paddle. The compression prevents blurring from movement, and leads to a significant reduction in the x-ray dose. It also helps to spread the breast tissue out, making the mammogram easier to read.

After the mammograms are reviewed it is sometimes necessary to take extra mammograms,

to focus on a more dense area of breast. Once the images are produced, a radiologist who also specializes in breast imaging, will interpret them.

How long does it take?

A mammography appointment will be booked for thirty minutes.

Your appointment includes the time to:

- Register your details
- Complete important medical history paperwork
- Complete any necessary preparation steps
- Complete the mammogram
- Collect your films

Note the vast majority of mammogram examinations take 30 minutes, but with the ultrasound appointment includes as a general rule we advise to allow an hour for your appointment.

Once the scan is complete, the Radiologist will review all of the statistical information and send a full report to your doctor.

Preparation

Please bring your referral (letter from your doctor) and your Medicare and/or Pension Health care card with you to your appointment. If you have had any mammograms or breast ultrasounds previously performed, it is extremely important to bring these with you to your next appointment. Previous images are useful to show changes in your breast tissue over time.

Do not wear any deodorant or talcum powder prior to your examination as it can interfere with the interpretation of your images. If you are pregnant or breast feeding it is imperative to advise our staff of this when booking your appointment.

If you have breast implants please inform our staff when you are making your appointment so that adequate appointment time is allocated.



FAQs

Who is at risk?

Like any x-ray examination, mammography uses x-radiation. With the latest advances in imaging technology mammography units are designed to deliver only the necessary dose required to x-ray each individual breast. Research clearly identifies that the life-saving benefits of early breast cancer detection outweighs the negligible risks of low-level radiation exposure.

Is a mammogram painful?

The majority of patients that attend mammography describe the procedure as being uncomfortable; it should not be a painful experience. Women who experience pre-menstrual tenderness of the breasts are advised to wait until their menstrual period is finished before having their mammogram. If you had had a painful mammogram in the past, please let our staff know when you arrive for your appointment. With improved techniques and the help of our experienced staff, painful mammograms can be avoided.

Is it safe?

Mammography uses x-rays which is a form of ionising radiation. All radiation is cumulative and has associated risks that cannot be avoided. Mammograms are only performed where it is deemed the benefit of the examination will outweigh any potential risks. Mammograms are performed with very low dose x-rays. Further, specially calibrated chambers on the mammography machine terminate the x-ray as soon as adequate detail has been recorded.

At Direct Radiology you can be assured that radiation doses are kept to as low as reasonably possible.

Does compressing the breast do any damage?

For most women, compression causes discomfort for merely a few seconds. It is very rare to experience bruising to the breast following excessive compression as our staff are highly experienced and adjust their technique to each individual patient.

Can I have a mammogram if I am breast-feeding?

A mammogram is not contraindicated if you are breast feeding but may cause slightly more discomfort. Expressing or feeding before your mammogram is recommended for your comfort.

Can I have a mammogram if I have implants?

Yes, mammography is generally safe for women with implants.

There is an extremely small chance that the pressure placed on the implant by the mammography machine could cause the implants to rupture or break. Our staff are highly trained in performing mammograms on patients with implants.

Why do I need an ultrasound as well as a mammogram?

Often a mammogram is supplemented by a breast ultrasound examination. This will be used to obtain more information and prevent a delay in diagnosis.