

MAMMOGRAPHY

What is it?

Mammography is an x-ray examination of the breasts, which can show breast cancers at an early stage, when they are too small for you or your doctor to see or feel. Mammography is the most reliable way of detecting breast cancer early but, like other screening tests, it is not perfect. For example, some cancers are very difficult to see on the x-ray and some cancers, even though they are there, cannot be seen on the x-ray at all.

What preparation is needed for the examination?

There is no special preparation required for this examination but you are advised to dress with separates (ie, trousers/skirt and top), as you will be asked to undress to the waist.

What exactly happens during the examination?

When you arrive in the Department a female radiographer will take you into the room and explain the procedure to you. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have. She will then x-ray each breast and this involves putting your breasts, one at a time, between two special plates. Your breasts will be pressed between the two plates for a few seconds.

Does this procedure hurt?

Only a few women find mammography uncomfortable but occasionally some women find it painful, as the breasts have to be held firmly in position and pressed to take a good x-ray. If pain is experienced it usually only lasts for as long as the mammogram, although, in a small number of women, it may continue for some time. There is no evidence that this procedure harms the breast.

How long will it take?

A mammogram takes a few minutes and your whole visit to the Breast Assessment Unit should take about half an hour.

When will I get my results?

When you have had the examination, the radiographer will tell you how and approximately when you will get the results but they are usually sent to the doctor who referred you to us within 48 hours.

Aftercare

There is no specific aftercare following this procedure.

HCA

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