

# Breast Health

## What are some of the ways that I can take control of my own breast health?

More and more women today are talking about breast health, prevention, and early detection of problems. Statistics tell us that one in every eight women in the U.S. will develop breast cancer at some point in her lifetime. By spreading the word that mammograms are safe and simple, thousands of lives are saved every year through early detection. A visit to Regional West's Breast Health Center takes less than an hour, but the peace of mind you gain from taking charge of your breast health will last a lifetime.

While the vast majority of breast abnormalities are benign, they can cause great anxiety for a woman and her family. Since there is still no sure way to prevent breast cancer, increased awareness, education, and early detection are critical components of breast health.

It's important that all women do monthly breast self-exams as well as having a yearly physical that includes a breast exam. According to the American College of Radiology, women are encouraged to start annual screening mammograms at age 40.

## How does the Breast Health Center serve the needs of area women?

Our facility is a comprehensive breast health center—women can have mammograms and additional procedures, as well as schedule and have biopsies here. With four exam rooms and multiple technologists, there is less waiting time for appointments. The Breast Health Center also offers 3D tomography, breast health education, breast ultrasound, breast MRI, stereotactic breast biopsies, ultrasound biopsies, and galactography.

## Why are regular mammograms so important?

One in eight women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. The number one risk factor for breast cancer is gender, followed by age and family history. Mammography is the single most effective method to detect breast changes that may be cancer—long before physical symptoms can be seen or felt. As women age, their risk of breast cancer increases.



## How do I prepare for my mammogram?

We recommend wearing comfortable, two piece clothing to your mammogram appointment. Please refrain using body powder, deodorant, glitter lotion, or perfume before your mammogram. Sometimes, these contain substances that may show as white spots on the x-ray.

## What happens if something abnormal is found on my mammogram?

First, don't panic. The majority of patients called back by the radiologist are found to have benign changes within the breast. For example, a summation shadow is an overlapping of benign tissue within the breast that initially appears more worrisome. However, with some additional imaging, the radiologist can prove the area in question is in fact normal breast tissue. If a tumor is identified, remember that 80% of all breast tumors are benign.

If any problems are revealed, women can discuss treatment options one-on-one with radiologists at the Breast Health Center.

Because cancer treatment often involves multiple care providers and complex psychosocial issues, a cancer patient navigator is available to help women sort through and coordinate treatment options if breast cancer is diagnosed. He or she is also there to offer education and emotional support every step of the way from diagnosis to post-treatment.

## How long does it take to get results?

We know that our patients' time is valuable and try to make the process as streamlined and 'one-stop' as possible.

*For mammograms:* The clinician usually receives the report in one to two business days. The patient receives a letter with the radiologist's recommendations in approximately one to two weeks. However, if a patient needs to return for additional imaging, a Breast Health Center employee will attempt to contact the patient by phone in two to three days to set up an appointment.

*For biopsies:* Biopsy results usually return within one to two business days and the radiologist will then discuss them with you.

## What is the best way to maintain breast health?

- Perform monthly self breast exams. This should be done at the end of your menstrual cycle when breast tissue is least swollen or tender. The goal is to learn what your normal is. When 'normal' is known, 'abnormal' becomes easy to recognize.
- Report any bothersome or worrisome breast changes to your physician or provider. He or she will carefully evaluate it, then offer a treatment recommendation.
- Get a mammogram. One out of eight women in the U.S. will develop breast cancer in her lifetime. The best chance for survival and cure lies in early detection, when the cancer is the smallest. Mammography, a low dose X-ray, can detect cancers that are still too small to feel. According to the American College of Radiology, women are encouraged to start annual screening mammograms at age 40. Yearly mammograms will show any subtle changes the soonest. If you have had an immediate relative (mother, sister, etc.) diagnosed with breast cancer, you may begin screening mammograms 10 years prior to the earliest age at diagnosis in your family. Talk to your physician or provider for more information.

### **If you have any questions, call:**

308-630-2700 to speak to Scheduling Services

308-630-2253 to speak to a Breast Health Center technologist