

The Miami Times
Health & Wellness

SECTION B

MIAMI, FLORIDA, OCTOBER 12-18, 2011



Your first mammogram

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You just reached that milestone birthday, and your doctor tells you it's time to schedule your first mammogram. Here's some information to help you get ready.

Mammograms use low-dosages of X-rays to produce images of the internal structure of the breasts. Mammograms are an important tool in the early detection of breast cancer and may help find cancers several years before symptoms appear.

MAKING MAMMOGRAMS MORE COMFORTABLE

You may have heard stories about "painful" mammograms, but there are steps you can take to make the procedure more comfortable. Scheduling your mammogram during the week after your menstrual cycle may help because your breasts will be less tender at that time. Breast tissue often becomes more sensitive the week before and the week during your period.

On the day of your mammogram appointment, don't apply powders, deodorants, antiperspirants, lotions, creams or perfumes under your arms, or on or around your breasts. These products may contain metallic particles that will show up on the mammogram film.

WHAT TO EXPECT

After you've checked in at the mammogram facility, you'll be taken to a private area where you will take off your clothing above the waist, including your bra, and put on a patient gown. If you are wearing jewelry such as chains, necklaces or have piercings in the breast area, you should take those off as well.

A technician will help position you for the mammogram. The technician will move the machine and then place your breast tissue between the two plates. She will need to adjust your position and tell you where to place your arms and how to stand.

The mammogram plates will be gradually moved together so that your breast tissue is compressed between them. A good mammogram image means good compression must take place. While you may feel some discomfort as the breast tissue is squeezed, you should

Please turn to **MAMMOGRAM 19B**

What to expect during and after your first mammogram

MAMMOGRAM
continued from 17B

not feel pain. Talk to the technician if the compression becomes too uncomfortable. It may help to remember that by holding still, it only takes a few minutes for the X-ray image to be taken, and then the compression can be stopped.

While the image is taken, you will need to hold very. This prevents movement that might blur the image. If the images are acceptable, you'll

be able to dress and continue with your day.

AFTER YOUR MAMMOGRAM

A radiologist, a physician who received special training in interpreting X-ray images including mammograms, will carefully study the mammogram films and provide a report to your physician. You will receive written notification from the mammography department if the mammogram was normal. Should any areas

need additional study, your doctor will let you know about the findings and tell you about additional tests.

To schedule your first mammogram, give us a call at 305-835-6105. We'd be happy to answer any questions you might have so that you're ready for this important picture.

SIDEBAR:

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends biennial screening mammography for women aged

50 to 74 years. According to the American Cancer Society, women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam at least once every three years and beginning at age 40, women should have a clinical breast exam and screening mammogram every year. Ultimately, women should talk to their doctor and make an informed decision about whether mammography is right for them based on their family history, general health, and personal values.