



Digital mammogram (left) Film x-ray (right)

A Clearer Image

Advanced digital mammography takes electronic images, not film images. The benefit? Images can be manipulated to improve resolution and contrast. The clearer images make it easier to view dense tissue and small tumors, and often eliminate the need for follow-up imaging.

Earlier Detection

Studies suggest that 10 - 20 percent of breast cancers detected by self-examination were not visible on film x-rays^{2\}.

- Digitally imaging the breast may improve a physician's ability to detect small tumors.
- When cancers are small, the woman has more treatment options that may lead to a better outcome.
- Mammography increases the detection of small, abnormal growths in the milk ducts, called ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS).
- If DCIS is caught early enough, women are usually treated with a lumpectomy, which is breast-conserving surgery that removes only the affected area of the breast and not the entire breast.

Improved Care

According to a National Cancer Institute study, digital mammography was significantly better in screening these women:

- Under age 50
- Of any age with very dense or extremely dense breast tissue
- Pre- or perimenopausal women of any age

For women who fell into these three subgroups, the study also found that:

- Lesions detected by digital mammography and missed by film included many invasive cancers and medium- and high-grade in situ lesions.
- Many of these cancers were confined to the breast.
- These are the lesions that must be detected early to save more lives through screening.

Optimal Results

Before having your mammogram, the American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends that you:

- Do not schedule your mammogram for the week before your period if your breasts are tender at this time.
- The best time for a mammogram is one week following your period.
- Do not wear deodorant, talcum powder or lotion under your arms or on your breasts on the day of the exam.
- These can appear on the mammogram as calcium spots.
- Describe any breast symptoms or problems to the technologist performing the exam.

Ask when your results will be available; do not assume the results are normal. Follow up with your doctor to get your results.