

EDUCATOR RESOURCES

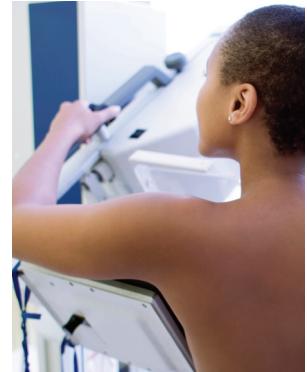


Breast Cancer Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Information

Breast Cancer Screening Tests

What is a Mammogram?

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breasts. It can find breast cancer when it is very small, even too small to feel — and easier to treat.



Important Information About Mammograms:

- A mammogram is the best screening tool we have today to find breast cancer.
- Starting at age 40, women at average risk should get a mammogram every year.
- However, some breast cancers are not seen on a mammogram. All clinical findings should be checked by a health care provider, even if a mammogram is normal.

What is a Clinical Breast Exam?

A Clinical Breast Exam (CBE) is a physical exam done by a health care provider. During a CBE, your health care provider (e.g. nurse or doctor) looks at your breasts and carefully feels each entire breast from the collarbone to the bra line and from the armpit to the breastbone.



Important Information About CBEs:

- A CBE should be part of regular medical checkups. If one is not offered, ask for one.
- CBEs can be helpful in finding tumors in women less than 40 years of age, for whom mammograms are not recommended.
- Have a CBE at least every three years starting at age 20 and every year starting at age 40.
- When a mammogram is combined with a CBE the chances for finding cancer early are even greater than either test used alone. When breast cancer is found and treated early, most women go on to live long and healthy lives.

If someone in your audience doesn't have a doctor or health insurance, they may qualify for a low or no-cost mammogram; call the Susan G. Komen® Breast Care Helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. EST (6:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. PT).



Some women believe their health care provider should be the one to suggest a CBE or mammogram. Encourage them to ask their providers about which screenings they should have.

Breast Cancer Diagnosis

Breast cancer is often first suspected when a lump or visual change in the breast is found or when an abnormal area is seen on a mammogram. Most of the time, these findings do not turn out to be cancer. However, the only way to know for sure is through follow-up tests.

A biopsy is required to diagnose breast cancer.

Some benign breast conditions can look like breast cancer. More tests may be needed to rule out the disease. A biopsy may be needed. Biopsies can be done with a needle or in the operating room. Biopsies involve removal of tissue or cells, which is then examined under a microscope for cancer cells.

The findings from a biopsy are reported on a pathology report. In the U.S., most breast biopsies result in a benign (non-cancerous) finding.

Treatment Options

There are different ways to treat breast cancer, including:

- Surgery: removal of cancerous tissue or tumors
- Radiation therapy: treatment using high energy X-rays to destroy cancer cells in the exposed area
- Chemotherapy: the use of drugs to kill cancer cells
- Hormone therapy: prevents cancer cells from getting the hormones they need to grow
- Targeted or biologic therapy: treatment that works by attacking specific targets (proteins) to kill cancer cells with little harm to healthy cells
- Immunotherapy: drugs that help the body's immune system attack cancer cells



Depending on many factors, such as the type of breast cancer, stage at diagnosis and size and location of the tumor and tumor profiling, treatment may include one or more of these options.

Tumor profiling tests give information about the genes in cancer cells. Tumor profiling is used to help make treatment decisions in some people with estrogen receptor-positive cancers. It can help decide whether or not chemotherapy is needed in addition to hormone therapy.

If you are diagnosed with breast cancer, talk with your health care provider about tests that might be done to help decide on the treatment that is most appropriate for you.



For more information about various treatment options, see [Treatment Breast Cancer](#) on [komen.org](#).