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## **MAMMOGRAPHY**

Mammography is a useful tool in the early detection of cancer. After careful review of many clinical studies, The American Cancer Society has made the following recommendations.

- (1) Women aged 20-40 should perform breast self-exams monthly and have a breast exam every three years by their physician.
- (2) Women from 40-49 should do breast self-exams monthly plus have a yearly breast exam by their physician and a mammogram every one or two years.
- (3) Women over 50 should do a breast self-exam monthly, have a breast exam by their physician every year, and have a mammogram every year.
- (4) Women under the age of 50 with a positive family history should consult their physicians regarding mammograms.

Mammograms are helpful in “screening” a woman for the presence of a mass that cannot be felt and in determining if a nodule that can be felt is malignant. At times, the mammogram may be followed by sonography to assist in viewing the breast and distinguishing between solid and fluid-filled masses. Ultrasound (sonography) is the use of sound wave echoes to create a picture of the breast tissue.

Low dose X-ray examinations of the breast are used in today’s mammography. The amount of radiation delivered to the breast is minimal. Experimental evidence has shown that it would require more than 100 “low dose” mammograms to increase the incidence of breast cancer one percentage point (to 8% from the rate of 7%.) Obviously, no patient is going to have 100 mammograms.

It is prudent to obtain a baseline mammogram between the ages of 35 and 40. The combination of breast self-examination, physician examination, and regular mammography leads to early diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer prior to the appearance of a mass that can be felt. With an early diagnosis, the probability of a cure is 95%.

It is best to schedule your mammogram for the week **after** your period ends when the breasts are least swollen, lumpy, and tender. This is also the ideal time for breast self-examination. For your mammogram, wear a comfortable, two-piece outfit for easy examination since you will be asked to undress from the waist up. Do not use powders, creams, or deodorants on your breasts or underarms prior to your appointment; their use may interfere with the test results.