

Mammograms

Pre-reading

Questions: What do you know about the subject of this reading?
What more would you like to learn about it?

Definitions: Tissue – a group of cells in the body
Diagnostic – used in identifying the nature or cause of a disease



Photo Courtesy of Salud En Acción

Reading*

15 According to the National Cancer Institute breast cancer is the most common type of cancer
30 among women in this country (except for skin cancer). Each year more than 211,000 American
46 women learn they have this disease. A mammogram is an important **screening** tool that can help
doctors find and treat cancer early.

52 The test uses a special x-ray machine to take pictures of both breasts. The results are
68 recorded on film that a doctor can examine. Mammograms test for breast lumps and changes in
84 breast tissue that may develop into problems over time. They can find small lumps or growths that
101 a doctor or woman can't feel when doing a breast exam.

112 Breast lumps or growths can be benign (not cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). If a lump
127 is found, the doctor will order a **biopsy** – a test where a small amount of tissue is taken from the
147 lump and area around the lump. The tissue is sent to a lab to look for cancer or changes that may
168 mean cancer is likely to develop. Finding breast cancer early means, that a woman has a better
185 chance of surviving the disease. There are also more choices for treatment when breast cancer is
201 found early.

203 There are two types of mammograms. Screening mammograms are done for women who
216 have no symptoms of breast cancer. Diagnostic mammograms are done when a woman has
230 symptoms of breast cancer or a breast lump. This type takes longer because more pictures of the
247 breast are taken.

250 Getting a mammogram is easy and does not take much time. First, you stand in front of a
268 special x-ray machine. Then the person who takes the x-rays (always a woman) places your
283 breasts (one at a time) between two plastic plates. The plates press your breast and make it flat.

301 You will feel pressure on your breast for a few seconds. It may cause some discomfort,
317 feeling like a squeeze or pinch. The breasts need to be flat in order to produce the best possible
336 picture. Most often, two pictures are taken of each breast, one from the side and one from above.
354 The whole process takes only a few minutes.

362 Women over 40 should get a mammogram every 1 to 2 years. Women who have had breast
379 cancer or those with a family history of breast cancer may need to start having mammograms at a
397 younger age or more often. Talk to your doctor about how often you should get a mammogram.
414 Be aware that mammograms don't take the place of getting breast exams from a doctor and
430 examining your own breasts.

434 If you find a lump or see changes in your breast, talk to your doctor right away no matter
453 what your age. Your doctor may order a mammogram for you to get a better look at your breast
472 changes.

473 *Source: *Office on Women's Health in the Department of Health and Human Services*

Understanding

1. Why is it wise to get a mammogram? _____

2. When should a woman get a mammogram? And, how often? _____

3. What is a **biopsy**? _____

4. Who is at greatest risk of developing breast cancer? _____

5. What are two ways of checking for breast problems? _____

6. What are two types of lumps that may be found in the breast? How do they differ? _____

7. What does the word **screen** mean in this reading? _____

Writing

Choice A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Choice B: Write about your experience with a mammogram or about someone you know who has had one. How was it similar to or different from the information described in the reading?

Choice C: Write about how breast cancer has touched your life or the life of someone you know.
