

I am between the ages 40-49. Is a screening mammogram right for me?

What is a screening mammogram?

A screening mammogram is an xray that checks for abnormalities in the breast. The benefit of having a screening mammogram is that it may find breast cancer before symptoms occur. Less treatment may be needed and chance of a cure improves if breast cancer is found before symptoms occur. Survival rates also increase.

Screening for breast cancer is for women who do not have breast symptoms. If you have any of these symptoms, you should see a healthcare provider right away for a breast exam. Your provider may order a more specific test after he or she examines your breasts.

- Breast Pain
- Lump
- Dimpling
- Nipple discharge
- Skin Retraction

If you are between the ages 40-49, a mammogram may be right for you if you have any of the following risk factors:

- Have had breast cancer
- Have a strong family history of breast and/or ovarian cancer
- Have had a breast biopsy
- Have the BRCA-1 or BRCA-2 gene mutation yourself or in your family
- Are unsure of your family history
- Are of Ashkenazi Jewish decent
- Never had children
- Had your first child after age 30
- Started your menstrual periods at an early age
- Drink 2 or more alcoholic drinks daily
- Are overweight
- Told you have dense breasts from a previous mammogram
- Have had chest mantle radiation for Hodgkin or non-Hodgkin Lymphoma

If you are between the ages 40-49, a mammogram may not be right for you if you:

- Are not at an increased risk for breast cancer
- Feel the possible harms of screening mammography are greater than the benefits
- Would feel upset if the mammogram found something that required more testing, but turned out normal

Is a screening mammogram right for me?

There is no right or wrong answer about whether to start screening mammography between the ages of 40-49. Talk with your healthcare provider and make the decision that is right for you this year. You can decide to begin screening in the future if you change your mind.

If you would like more online help with making this decision, you can access the National Cancer Institute's [Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool](#). This tool can estimate a 40-49 year old woman's risk of developing invasive breast cancer.

