How often should I get a *mammogram?* AGES 50-74

All national guidelines recommend routine screening mammograms between ages 50-74. Screening mammograms can find breast cancer early, before you have symptoms. Some groups recommend a mammogram every year and others every two years. To decide what is best for you, you should consider the benefit and possible harm that can result from getting mammograms. You also need to understand your personal risk of breast cancer.

Screening mammograms are done to check for breast cancer in women who have no concerning symptoms with their breasts. **If you currently have any breast symptoms such as pain or lumps, please see your primary care provider right away and don't wait for a screening test.**

Every Year or Every Two Years?

- **For women ages 50-74 with an AVERAGE risk of breast cancer,** most studies tell us that having a mammogram every two years gives about the same overall benefit as having a mammogram every year.
- **For women ages 50-74 with a HIGHER risk of breast cancer,** yearly mammograms may be a better choice (see risk factors on the next page).

There may be a slightly higher chance of finding cancer at an earlier and more curable stage with yearly mammograms. However, having a mammogram only every two years reduces the possible harms of mammograms.

Benefits of Mammograms

Regular screening mammograms reduce your chances of dying of breast cancer. Mammograms can find breast cancer early. If breast cancer is found in an early stage, it may be easier to treat. If 10,000 women get regular mammograms between the ages of 50-59, about 10 of these women will have their lives saved because of screening mammograms. The benefits of screening mammograms become greater as women get older.

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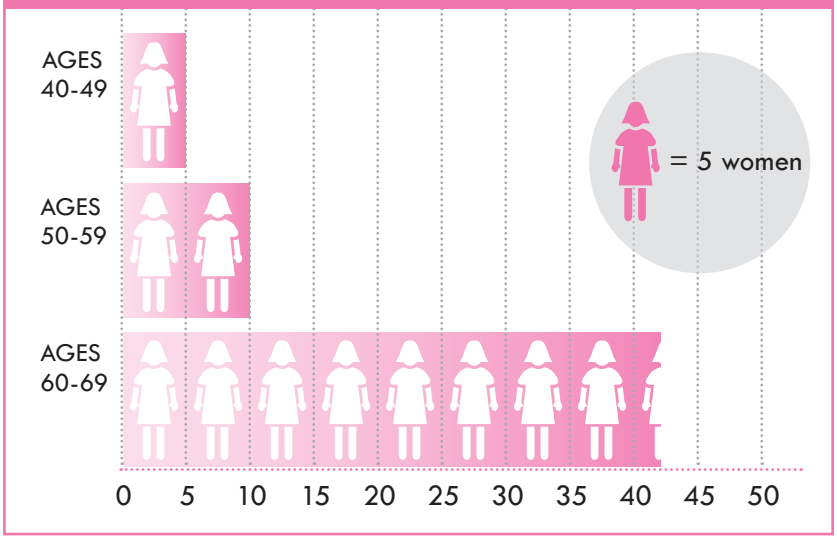
Likelihood of a Mammogram Saving You from Dying of Breast Cancer as You Age



Possible Harms of Mammograms

Mammograms are not a perfect test. Some breast cancers may be missed. A few women will die of breast cancer even if they have regular mammograms.

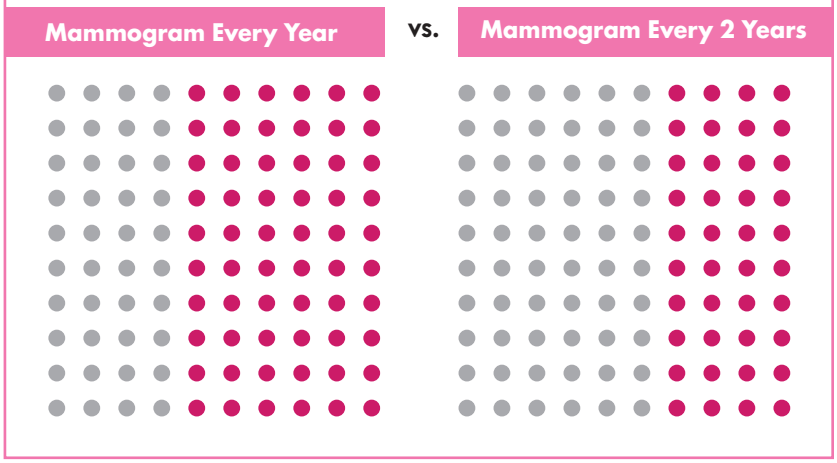
You may also have a **"false positive"** result on a mammogram. This happens when a mammogram shows a spot that looks abnormal, but further testing shows there was no problem after all. There are more false positives in women who have a mammogram every year than in women who have a mammogram every two years.

Some cancers found by screening mammograms will never cause any health problems in the future. This is called **"overdiagnosis."** Even after further examination, providers cannot be sure which cancers will be harmless. This means some women will get surgery, chemotherapy or radiation treatment they don't need. Estimates suggest that 1 in 5 women diagnosed with breast cancer are over-diagnosed. Having a mammogram every two years instead of every year may reduce the chance of overdiagnosis.

Average Risk of False Positives in Women Ages 50-74

Over the course of 10 years, the average number of women (out of 100) who will have a false positive if they have a mammogram every year vs. every two years:

● = woman
● = woman with false positive



Increased Risk

Some women are at increased risk for breast cancer. Risk factors include:

- A first degree relative, such as a mother or sister, who has had breast cancer
- A previous biopsy not showing cancer but with an abnormal result (atypia)
- A previous but normal breast biopsy (benign)
- Previous radiation treatments to the chest
- Dense breasts found on mammogram

Women at higher risk of breast cancer should have more frequent mammograms.

Talk to you provider about how often you should have a mammogram based on your values, preferences and risk factors.

To estimate your personal risk of developing breast cancer visit: **cancer.gov/bcrisktool**

Reference: Pace LE et al. A systematic assessment of benefits and risks to guide breast cancer screening decisions. JAMA. 2014;311(13):1327-1335.