

# Should I get a mammogram?

AGES

# 75+

Some national guidelines recommend stopping mammograms at age 75, while others recommend continued screening. The benefit of screening for women age 75 years and older is unclear. While the chance of getting breast cancer increases with age, breast cancer grows more slowly in older women. Some cancers never cause problems. To decide if you should continue getting mammograms, you should consider your overall health and 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.**

## Should I continue to get mammograms?

Whether or not you should continue screening mammograms should be based on your current health (including any chronic conditions you have) and your ability to complete daily activities. Screening tests are generally not helpful unless you expect to live another 10 years or more.

- Younger, healthier women are more likely to benefit from a screening mammogram than older women that are in poor health.
- For women age 75 years and older, the benefits of a mammogram depend on overall health and life expectancy.

## Benefits of Mammograms

Screening mammograms can find breast cancer early, before you have symptoms. When found earlier, cancer may be easier to treat and is also more likely to be cured.

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**Out of 5 women** diagnosed with breast cancer from a mammogram...



... **1 woman** is overdiagnosed.

**Out of every 10 women** who receive regular mammograms over the course of 5 years...



... **1 woman** will receive a false positive.

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## Possible Harms of Mammograms

Mammograms are not a perfect test. Some breast cancers will not show up on mammograms. A few women will die of breast cancer even if they have regular mammograms.

You may have a **“false positive”** on a mammogram. This happens when a mammogram shows a spot that looks worrisome for cancer, but further testing shows there was no problem after all. Out of every 10 women who receive regular mammograms over the course of five years, one woman will have a false positive.

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.

## Increased Risk

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

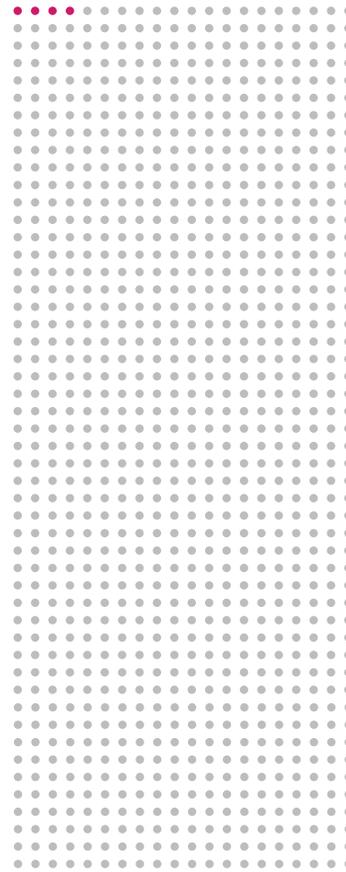
- A first degree relative, such as a mother or sister, who has had breast cancer
- A previous biopsy not showing cancer but with an abnormal result (atypia)
- A previous but normal breast biopsy (benign)
- Previous radiation treatments to the chest
- Dense breasts found on mammogram

Talk to your provider about whether you should continue to get mammograms based on your values, preferences and risk factors.

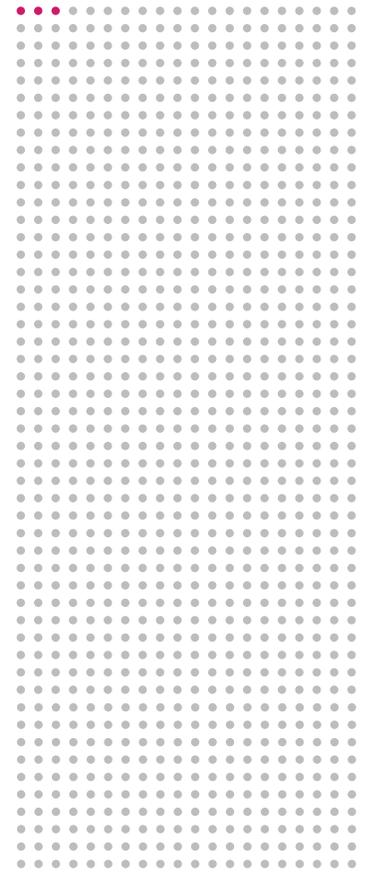
## What is the risk of dying from breast cancer with or without screening mammograms?

- = woman age 75 or older
- = Breast cancer deaths over the next 5 years

### Breast Cancer Deaths in Women who **DO NOT** Continue Mammography



### Breast Cancer Deaths in Women who **DO** Continue Mammography



Out of 1,000 women age 75 and older, **1 less** woman may die of breast cancer in those who choose to continue mammograms.

To estimate your personal risk of developing breast cancer visit: [cancer.gov/bcrisktool](https://www.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

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