

Breast Density Patient Letter: Discussion Points for Providers

Patient receives new breast density letter stating that she has dense breasts.

Does she continue getting screening mammograms?

She *should* continue with annual mammograms. Mammograms are the only effective tool proven to lower breast cancer mortality rates for all breast densities.

Is she at higher risk for breast cancer?

Reassure her that breast density alone has only a small impact on her breast cancer risk.

She wants to know specifically how it changes her risk.

Age Conditional Risk

30 years of age	1 in 227
40 years of age	1 in 68
50 years of age	1 in 42
60 years of age	1 in 28
70 years of age	1 in 26

1) Review her mammogram report

- If the report states her density is **heterogeneously dense** (40% of women), this is associated with minimal risk (RR=1.2 compared to average breast density).
- If her density is **extremely dense** (10% of women), this doubles her risk of breast cancer compared to average density, similar to the risk associated with a first-degree family history (mother, sister, daughter). For example, having extremely dense tissue on its own raises the 10-year risk of breast cancer in the average 50 year old woman from 1 in 42 to 1 in 21.

2) Mammogram report will include lifetime risk score if $\geq 20\%$

$\geq 20\%$ lifetime risk

Recommend annual 3D mammogram (tomosynthesis) and annual Breast MRI for screening.

Screening Breast MRI is covered by insurance for high risk women. If a woman is screened annually with MRI and mammogram, no additional screening tests (such as ultrasound) are needed.

$< 20\%$ lifetime risk

Recommend annual 3D mammogram (tomosynthesis)

Current literature reports increased cancer detection and decreased false positives with 3D mammography. Educate the patient about the risks and benefits of screening MRI and ultrasound (higher cancer detection, but also higher false positive biopsy rates, short term follow-up recommendations and increased anxiety). Additional screening tests are an out-of-pocket cost for the patient, unless they have been assessed to have high risk. Assist the patient in making the best personal choice to meet her needs based on these factors, using a shared decision making process.



Breast Imaging Scheduling:..... 425.899.2831

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