

Dense Breast Tissue

What it means and what you can do about it

Your mammogram indicates that you may have dense breast tissue. Roughly half of all women have dense breast tissue, which is normal. Dense breast tissue may make it more difficult to evaluate your mammogram. We are sharing this information with you and your health care provider to help raise your awareness of breast density. We encourage you to talk with your health care provider about this and other breast cancer risk factors. Together, you can decide which screening options are right for you.

What is breast density?

Breast density refers to the amount of normal, non-fatty tissue visible in a woman's breasts on mammograms. There are four categories of breast density, ranging from almost all fatty tissue to extremely dense tissue with very little fat. If your breasts are in the higher two categories (heterogeneously or extremely) they are considered "dense."

Why is breast density important?

- Mammograms can be less accurate in women with dense breasts. The dense tissue looks white on mammograms and can look similar to breast masses or tumors.
- **54% of women seen at Seattle Cancer Care Alliance (SCCA) have dense breasts.** It is important to note that breast density is only one of many factors which determine a woman's breast cancer risk.

I have dense breasts. What should I do next?

- Talk with your provider to see if there is anything besides breast density that may increase your risk for getting breast cancer. Research studies have not yet shown clear benefit from additional tests such as ultrasound or MRI for women who have dense breasts **without other breast cancer risk factors.**
- **Continue to get yearly mammograms**, particularly ones with **3D mammography** technology.

We are here to help!

Our breast clinic providers can evaluate and counsel women at high risk for breast cancer. They will discuss breast screening and strategies to reduce breast cancer risk.

Breast Health Clinic at SCCA-South Lake Union
Scheduling phone (206) 606-2166

Women's Health Care Center at UWMC-Roosevelt
Scheduling phone (206) 598-7749

Website: www.SeattleCCA.org/Breast-Health

3D mammography uses advanced technology to detect cancer more accurately than a 2D mammogram. It also helps decrease "false alarms" and the need for additional testing. **At UW and SCCA we use 3D mammography as our standard screening exam.**

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