

Notes



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MEDANTA  
BREAST SERVICES

PATIENT  
INFORMATION

SCREENING FOR  
BREAST CANCER

MCITY/MBS/SCBC/P/MAY15/003



## Introduction

Breast screening is a method of identifying breast cancer at an early stage. It is done by performing x-rays of the breast known as mammogram. The mammogram can detect small changes in breast tissue which may indicate cancers which are too small to be felt either by the woman herself or by a doctor. By the time a lump can be felt, it is likely to have been there for quite some time; If left undetected for a long time, the chances of cancer growth and metastasis (spread) are higher.

## Facts about breast cancer

- Breast cancer is rapidly becoming the number one cancer in women in the country
- 1 in 22 women in India is likely to develop breast cancer during her lifetime
- The average age of the high risk group in India is between 43 to 46 years
- Only 1 in 10 lumps , i.e. 10% of lumps, in the breast is cancerous

## Self-screening of breast

Lookout for

- Appearance of a small lump or change in breast consistency
- Change in breast shape or size
- Discharge from the nipple, bloody or clear, unrelated to pregnancy
- Puckering or dimpling of the breast skin

### **Remember!**

The risk of breast cancer increases as you get older.

## Specific recommendations of cancer experts

- Women over 20 years of age should self-examine their breast regularly
- The first mammogram is recommended at the age of 40 followed by regular screening.
- Women over 40 years of age should undergo mammogram once in 2 years.
- Women with two or more close relations (e.g. sister, mother, aunt) who have had breast cancer should consult their family doctor to assess the need for more frequent tests and genetic screening (if possible)
- If a nodule is found at any age, a clinical check-up followed by recommended tests (Mammogram/USG/MRI) is mandatory.

## What is a mammogram?

It is an x-ray of the breast which is performed by exposing the breast to a low dose of radiation. During the procedure, the breasts are compressed between two plates for a few seconds. This is not painful but some women may find it slightly uncomfortable.

The mammogram is reported by a specialised breast radiologist.

## Would you need more tests?

If the mammogram is reported as normal, you will not need any further tests. However, further tests will be required if the radiologist detects an abnormality.

These include

- Breast USG
- Breast MRI
- Breast Biopsy of the lump

## Advantages of screening

- It detects cancers at a stage when treatment is most likely to be successful.
- As the cancer is detected when it is very small, the chances of breast conserving surgery are increased. This allows the patient to save her breast.
- It saves lives by reducing the risk of dying from breast cancer.

## Disadvantages of screening

- Mammograms sometimes need to be repeated to better assess an abnormality seen in the initial mammogram.
- It may raise a false alarm by showing an abnormality in the breast, which on further diagnosis might not prove to be cancerous.
- Breast screening occasionally misses a cancer.

### **Remember!**

Breast screening cannot prevent cancer, it only detects the cancer.