

# Mammograms

## Five Frequently Asked Questions



**Willis Knighton**

Breast Centers



- **Are mammograms safe?**

With any kind of screening treatment, you should weigh the pros and cons. Some may worry about radiation exposure, but mammograms only involve a tiny amount of radiation, even less than an X-ray. The dose is low enough that the benefits of regular screenings outweigh any potential radiation issues. Of course, talk with your doctor if you have concerns.

- **Where should I get a mammogram?**

Find an accredited center that does many mammograms in a day. That means they have experienced staff who do this often. Having your mammogram in the same place each time makes it easier for doctors to compare images from one year to the next. Willis Knighton provides five convenient locations throughout the Shreveport-Bossier, and all of them share the same image storage system.

- **Is there anything I need to do to prepare for my mammogram?**

Wear a two-piece outfit because you will need to remove your top and bra. **Do not apply deodorant, antiperspirant, powder, lotion or ointment under your arms or on your chest the day of your mammogram.** These products can appear as white spots on the x-ray. The white spots can be mistaken for calcifications, small deposits of calcium in breast tissue that may indicate a benign condition or, in some cases, an early sign of breast cancer. If these appear on your mammogram, they may lead to unnecessary follow-up tests and anxiety.

- **What age should I begin having mammograms?**

When you reach age 40, you might choose to get yearly screening mammograms until you're 44. The American Cancer Society's guidelines recommend that women 45 to 54 should get a yearly mammogram, no question. When you turn 55 if your mammograms have been clear, your doctor might let you know that you can get a mammogram every other year. If you have a family history of breast cancer, your risk is higher, so you should talk to your doctor to determine when to start.

- **When will I get the results of my screening mammogram?**

You should get your results within 10 days. A copy of the report is mailed to the address you provide at time of registration. A copy of the results is mailed to your care provider. If you have signed up for the Willis Knighton Health Patient Portal, your results can be found there under Reports. Talk with your doctor about any concerns you have about your results. If your screening mammogram shows an area of concern, you may need a diagnostic mammogram or other test. This doesn't mean you have cancer. The radiologist who looks at them may have seen something that just looks different and wants further clarification.