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Mammography

Imaging Department



Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net. If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is the name for an x-ray carried out on the breast. The mammogram is produced by exposure to a controlled source of x-rays and shows the internal structure of the breast. The images produced may be recorded either on special photographic film or kept in digital form on computer and viewed on a screen.

Mammograms are used as a screening tool to detect early breast cancer in patients experiencing no symptoms and to diagnose breast disease in patients with symptoms such as a lump, pain or nipple discharge.

Preparing for a mammogram

It is important not to wear deodorant, talcum powder or perfume under your arms or on your breasts on the day of the mammogram. These can appear on the mammogram as calcium spots and mimic disease.

If you are pregnant, breast feeding or have breast implants please inform the radiographer prior to the examination.

If you have any previous mammogram films, bring them with you and give them to the radiographer at the time your mammogram.

What does the mammogram entail?

Once you are in the x-ray room, a radiographer will position your breasts against part of an x-ray machine. Each breast, in turn, is gradually compressed between the x-ray machine and a flat x-ray plate. A certain amount of heavy pressure is felt briefly. The radiographer will stand behind a glass shield during the x-ray exposure. You will be asked to keep still and hold your breath while the x-ray picture is taken. This reduces the possibility of a blurred image. Two x-ray views are taken of each breast. The radiographer will alter your position slightly between each x-ray.

The entire examination lasts approximately 15 minutes but the breast compression is momentary. The radiographer will check that the images are of good quality before you leave the room.

What happens after the mammogram?

The mammograms will be analysed later by a radiologist (X-Ray Doctor) who will send a report to your referring doctor. You will need to make an appointment to see your referring doctor to discuss the result of your mammogram.

It is common for patients to require further tests, such as additional mammography views or breast ultrasound, following a mammogram. The majority of these tests turn out to be normal.

Will the mammogram hurt?

Firm compression of the breasts is necessary to obtain a good mammogram. Generally people find the pressure on the breast uncomfortable and some find it painful. However the process is over quickly. Tenderness in the breasts can make the process more uncomfortable.

What are the risks of having a mammogram?

There are some risks associated with x-rays. Most of these related to the slightly increased risk of developing cancer. The risk, though, should be kept in perspective. The amount of radiation involved is equal to that which we receive naturally from the environment over a few months. If you have a breast lump or other breast symptoms then the risk of not having the examination will be greater than the risk associated with the radiation.