What types of mammograms are available?

Traditional mammograms are referred to as 2D. During this mammogram a two-dimensional picture is taken of the breast, allowing the radiologist to look for abnormalities in the tissue.

New technology offers a new type of mammogram called a 3D or digital breast tomosynthesis. During this screening, radiologists can view breast tissue one layer at a time, providing more visibility to fine details of the breast tissue. A 3D mammogram is an optional add-on study performed at the time of an annual mammogram. 3D mammograms take about the same time as 2D mammograms.

What are the benefits of a 3D mammogram?

3D mammography increases the ability to detect breast cancer by 30% when compared to the standard 2D mammograms alone. This means that there are some breast cancers that are visible on 3D imaging and not visible on 2D imaging.

Who Should Consider a 3D Mammogram?

All women can benefit from the advanced screening capabilities of a 3D mammogram and should consider this screening option.

At Adventist HealthCare Imaging, we encourage you to discuss questions about your mammogram first with your primary care physician to determine which type of screening is best for you based on your age, risk factors and health history.

Our team is also happy to address questions about your mammogram.

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Are there risks with 2D or 3D mammograms?
3D mammograms increase the radiation delivered to the breasts over the standard 2D mammogram. However, the increase in dose is not considered harmful to patients over the age of 30.

The radiation during mammograms (with 2D and 3D) is a fraction of what a woman receives from background radiation living in the United States for one year, and even less than the radiation dose a person gets by taking a cross-country flight.

Therefore, mammograms (both 2D and 3D) should never be avoided when considered medically appropriate because of the fear of radiation.

Will my insurance cover 3D mammograms?
While 3D mammograms are FDA approved, some insurance plans do not cover this screening, potentially resulting in additional costs to the patient.

3D mammograms are covered by Medicare, however still not always covered by private insurers. You can call your insurance provider prior to your appointment if you would like to know whether it is covered in your case.

If it is not covered and you would like to still receive a 3D mammogram, please let our clinical team know. This is considered an FSA-eligible expense.

Can 3D mammograms replace other screenings or diagnosis procedures such as breast MRI?
In some cases, 3D mammography can reduce the need to perform additional mammogram pictures when the radiologist wants to look at an area of mass or density on the mammogram in more detail. However, 3D mammograms are not a substitute for breast MRI or breast ultrasound, but rather a complement to them.

Where can I obtain a 3D mammogram?
3D mammograms are offered at these Adventist Healthcare Imaging locations:

- Shady Grove Breast Center
- Germantown
- Rockville
- Edmonston

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