

Breast health questions and answers

What are some of the ways that I can take control of my own breast health?

More and more women today are talking about breast health, prevention, and early detection of problems. Statistics tell us that one in every eight women in the U.S. will develop breast cancer at some point in her lifetime. By spreading the word that mammograms are safe and simple, thousands of lives are saved every year through early detection. A visit to Regional West's Breast Health Center takes less than an hour, but the peace of mind you gain from taking charge of your breast health will last a lifetime.

While the vast majority of breast abnormalities are benign, they can cause great anxiety for a woman and her family and since there is still no sure way to prevent breast cancer, increased awareness, education, and early detection are critical components of breast health.

It's important that all women do monthly breast self-exams as well as having a yearly physical that includes a breast exam. According to the American College of Radiology, women are encouraged to start annual screening mammograms at age 40.

How does the Breast Health Center serve the needs of area women?

Our facility is a comprehensive breast health center—women can have mammograms and additional procedures as well as schedule and have biopsies here. With four exam rooms and multiple technologists, there is less waiting time for appointments. The Breast Health Center also offers 3D tomography, breast health education, breast ultrasound, breast MRI, stereotactic breast biopsies, ultrasound biopsies, and galactography.

Why are regular mammograms so important?

One in eight women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. The number one risk factor for breast cancer is gender, followed by age and family history. Mammography is the single most effective method to detect breast changes that may be cancer—long before physical symptoms can be seen or felt. As women age, their risk of breast cancer increases.

What happens if something abnormal is found on my mammogram?

First, don't panic. The majority of patients called back by the radiologist are found to have benign changes within the breast. For example, a summation shadow is an overlapping of benign tissue within the breast that initially appears more worrisome. However, with some additional imaging, the radiologist can prove the area in question is in fact normal breast tissue. If a tumor is identified, remember that 80% of all breast tumors are benign.

If any problems are revealed, women can discuss treatment options one-on-one with radiologists at the Breast Health Center.

Because cancer treatment often involves multiple care providers and complex psychosocial issues, a cancer patient navigator is available to help women sort through and coordinate treatment options if breast cancer is diagnosed. He or she is also

there to offer education and emotional support every step of the way from diagnosis to post-treatment.

How long does it take to get results?

We know that our patients' time is valuable and try to make the process as streamlined and 'one-stop' as possible.

For mammograms: The clinician usually receives the report in one to two business days. The patient receives a letter with the radiologist's recommendations in approximately one to two weeks. However, if a patient needs to return for additional imaging, a Breast Health Center employee will attempt to contact the patient by phone in two to three days to set up an appointment.

For biopsies: Biopsy results usually return within 24 hours and the radiologist will then discuss them with you.

If you have any questions, call:

308-630-2253 to speak to a Breast Health Center technologist