

- U.S. Prevention Services Task Force: www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/uspstf.htm
- American Cancer Society: www.cancer.org

**Q: What kind of mammogram is best—
digital or film-screen?**

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A: Digital is best for women under the age of 50 as well as for women getting a mammogram for the first time. Studies show that digital tests are more accurate finding cancer in women with thicker or dense breasts, which is more common before menopause or in women who use hormone replacement therapy. Older women who have had the traditional film-screen tests for years still can get those tests.

However, Segel says that within five years, most film-screen mammogram machines will be obsolete. Women also need the exact same type of test, year-to-year, so doctors reading the tests have similar mammograms for comparison.

Q: There's controversy about breast self-exams, too?

A: Yes, for similar reasons. The task force says breast self-exams also lead too many women to get unnecessary biopsies and surgery. Others like the cancer society say self-exams play a small role in breast cancer detection, but have value because they get women looking for suspicious areas.

Q: Are there other ways to find breast cancer?

A: There are, but most are not federally approved or are a complement to mammography, not a replacement. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) tests may help find cancer in women with a family history of breast cancer, studies have shown. Another test, breast-specific gamma imaging, or molecular breast imaging, uses a high-resolution camera that picks up hot spots of cancer when women get a small injection of radioactive material that picks up the higher metabolic activity in cancer cells. In metro Detroit, Beaumont Hospital Troy and Regional Medical Imaging in Flint offer breast-specific gamma imaging; MRI is widely available. Either test might not be covered by health insurance.

Q: Many women avoid mammograms because they fear breast cancer will be found. What else do they need to know?

A: Usually, cancer is NOT found. Of 100 women who get a mammogram and who are called back for more tests, 24 will need a biopsy, which today almost always is done with a needle, not surgery, at least initially. Of the 24 getting biopsies, six will have breast cancer, Segel says. The survival rate for women with early-stage breast cancer is 95% five years later.

Q: I can't afford a mammogram. Is there any help available?

A: If you are uninsured or underinsured, ask a mammography center if it offers a discounted price. Many do. Also, Michigan offers free mammograms and Pap smears to uninsured women ages 40-60.

For details, call 888-242-2702 or go to
www.michigancancer.org/bcccp .