

FIRST PERSON

By Thomas S. Chang, M.D., FACR



Commit to Good Breast Health in October and Year-round

Most of us know someone who has endured the consequences, both physical and mental, of breast cancer. It is unfortunately a very common disease that affects one of every eight women in the United States.

As physicians committed to improving women's health, we at Weinstein Imaging Associates join in the observation of October as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. With breast cancer on everyone's mind, this is a particularly good time to share our expertise with you and to remind you about the steps you can take to promote good breast health.

Get Tested for Breast Cancer

The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends **yearly mammograms** for women starting at age 40. Mammography is the only screening test that has been proven to reduce your chance of dying from breast cancer. They also advocate **breast exams by your doctor** every three years when you are in your 20s and 30s and annually over 40. Although a recent report questioned the value of **monthly self-examination** of the breast, the ACS supports it as an option starting in your 20s. Lastly, they recommend **annual breast MRIs** for women at high risk of developing breast cancer.

The value of breast ultrasound for high-risk women with dense breast tissue is currently under investigation (we are one of 20 select breast centers to participate in this important study). The preliminary results are encouraging. We are sometimes asked about thermography and electrical skin resistance testing to detect breast cancer. To date, scientific support for these tests is lacking.

Prepare for Your Mammogram

- Wear a two-piece outfit to avoid having to undress fully for your mammogram.
- Refrain from deodorants, powders and creams in your underarms and on your breasts because they may show up on the mammogram and increase the need for additional mammogram pictures.

If you have sensitive or painful breasts, here are a few tips to lessen the discomfort:

- Schedule your mammogram shortly after your menstrual period when your breasts are likely to be less tender.
- Take ibuprofen, naproxen or similar medication prior to your mammogram and limit your caffeine intake.
- For women with extremely painful breasts,

apply lidocaine gel on your breasts and cover with clear plastic wrap for an hour before your mammogram. Of course, the gel must be wiped off right before the mammogram.

Be an Educated Consumer

The health care center where you have your mammogram really does matter – and deserves more research than shopping for your next car or time-share.

Considerations include:

- How quickly can you get an appointment?
- If additional views or a biopsy is needed, can they be performed promptly and efficiently?
- Will the mammogram results be available before you leave the office?
- How new is the equipment and technology?
- How experienced are the technologists and doctors?
- Is the environment comfortable and welcoming?

It is also a good idea to talk with other women about their mammogram experiences and to ask for their recommendations.

Get to Know Us

Breast imaging and minimally invasive breast biopsy constitute a major focus of our practice. We offer patients high-quality examinations and accurate interpretations. Statistics have confirmed that we're doing the right thing, as we surpass the national average in mammographic accuracy year after year. This is due in large part to the high level of specialized training attained by all of our radiologists and the fact that we read large numbers of screening mammograms on a daily basis, which is important in maintaining mammographic interpretive skills.

At Weinstein Imaging Associates, we treat every month as if it were October—National Breast Cancer Awareness Month—and encourage women to take charge of their health all year long. ■

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