

PRESS RELEASE

MAMMOGRAMS – The Gold Standard for Early Detection

September 28, 2018: The American Cancer Society estimates 266,120 new cases of invasive breast cancer in the United States in 2018. Many cases are preventable with regular mammogram screenings.

Mammography is currently the “gold standard” for early detection, because it can spot tumors as small as grains of rice - years before they could be detected by hand.

Most experts now agree that every woman should begin annual mammograms at age 40, or earlier if recommended by a healthcare provider due to high risk or symptomatic cases.

Some women find the compression of the breast to be uncomfortable, but proper compression is extremely important because it spreads the breast tissue more evenly, and greatly improves the quality of the image.

The doses of radiation are very low, and any adverse effects are far outweighed by the benefits of early detection. On mammographic x-rays, fat appears black while ducts, glands and tumors appear white. In young adults the glands and ducts are larger, so tumors are more difficult to see on x-rays. This is why mammograms are generally not done on younger women.

If a suspicious area is found on your mammogram or on a clinical breast exam, your physician may recommend a **diagnostic mammogram**. This exam includes special views that concentrate on the area in question and is different from the routine screening.

If you have nipple discharge, your physician may request a **ductogram**, which involves injecting a small amount of dye directly into the milk duct.

If you have a lump, an **ultrasound** exam with high frequency sound waves will help determine if the lump is solid (such as a fibroadenoma, or a cancerous tumor) or liquid (such as a cyst, which are usually benign).

Another way to approach a lump is to insert a small needle into it. This is called a **Fine Needle Aspiration**, or FNA. If the lump is a cyst, the syringe will fill with fluid and the lump will disappear. This means that it is most likely benign, and you will need nothing more than to have it rechecked in a few months.

If the lesion turns out to be solid, the physician may attempt to obtain a sampling of the cells to be examined under a microscope.

Sometimes the only way to be sure the abnormality is not cancerous is to do a **biopsy** - to take a sample of the tissue, and have it examined by a pathologist.

The sample can be obtained by a core biopsy, which is done with a large hollow needle, attached to something that works like an ear-piercing device.

If the lesion is difficult to feel by hand, your physician will use a **stereotactic mammography** unit to accurately guide the needle directly into the lesion - even if it is as small as a grain of rice. Some stereotactic units look like a mammography machine; others are shaped like a table with an opening for the breast.

Another choice is to have a **surgical biopsy** - taking out part of the lump, or the entire lump in surgery. This procedure can be done in a hospital or an outpatient center, and you will go home the same day. Whatever the technique, the sample will be sent to a pathologist, who will examine it under a microscope and formulate a definitive diagnosis.

Try not to worry while waiting for results - four out of five biopsies turn out to be non-cancerous.

It is important to note that your early detection plan should include monthly breast self-examination and regular clinical examinations.

When it comes to getting a mammogram, expect nothing but the best at Uintah Basin Healthcare. We have a dedicated Breast Care Coordinator to help you through the entire process. Our Radiology Department consists of dedicated team members certified in their modalities with specialized training to provide you with the care you deserve.

Schedule your annual women's health exam with one of Uintah Basin Healthcare's three certified OB-GYN providers (Dr. John Nolte, Dr. Scott Syndergaard, or Dr. Ben Williams), or Christy Thacker, FNP today in Roosevelt or Vernal by calling (435)722-4652. You may also schedule your mammogram by calling Women's Imaging directly at (435)781-2030.

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