Screening Mammogram

WHAT IS IT?
• Mammograms are the gold standard for breast screening. They are a low dose X-ray of the breast. The X-ray can find changes in the breast, even when the changes are too small for you or your doctor to feel or see.

BOTTOM-LINE
• Screening mammograms are the most effective tool for the early detection of breast cancer for most women.
• Women aged 50 and older should have a screening mammogram, generally every 2 years.
• Evidence shows that women aged 50-69 benefit most from regular mammograms.

Digital Mammogram

WHAT IS IT?
• Traditionally, mammogram images were displayed on film. Digital mammogram images are displayed on a computer screen. Both types of mammograms require the breast to be firmly compressed between two surfaces.

BOTTOM-LINE
• Mammograms are the gold standard for breast screening. Digital mammograms are more effective for women under the age of 50 or women of any age with dense breasts. Breast density shows up on mammograms, it cannot be felt. For all other women, regular film-screen mammograms remain highly effective for the early detection of breast cancer.

MRI

WHAT IS IT?
• MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is a type of medical imaging that uses magnetic fields and radio frequency fields to make detailed pictures of areas inside the body. It is a very different procedure than mammography in that it takes 45 minutes rather than 10 - 15 minutes and an injection of a contrast agent is involved.

BOTTOM-LINE
• Breast MRI in addition to mammography has been shown to be an effective screening modality for very high risk women, such as women with a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene.

To learn more or to make an appointment at the Ontario Breast Screening Program site nearest you:
Call toll-free: 1-800-668-9304 or visit: www.cancercare.on.ca

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Clinical Breast Examination

WHAT IS IT?
• A clinical breast exam is a physical exam of the breast done by a trained health professional.

BOTTOM-LINE
• It is an important part of a woman's regular health visit with her doctor or nurse.
• The Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) offers clinical breast exams by trained nurse examiners at some OBSP sites. Women screened at any mammography facility that does not provide a clinical breast exam service by a nurse examiner are encouraged to visit their family physician or other health care provider for this examination.

Breast Awareness

WHAT IS IT?
• Being breast aware means knowing how your breasts normally look and feel. That way, if there are any changes, you'll be more likely to notice them.

BOTTOM-LINE
• It is important to know how your breasts normally look and feel. Following a specific, regimented method at the same time each month, such as Breast Self-Examination, has not been found to be necessary. If you do become aware of any changes in your breasts, see your doctor or nurse.

Thermography

WHAT IS IT?
• Thermography, or thermal scanning, is a way to measure and map heat from the breast using a special camera. A computer looks for “hot spots” or different levels of heat. Then, it analyzes the pictures. The theory is that if an area of higher heat is found, it may mean more blood vessels are forming due to cancer. However, such areas may be present for other reasons.

BOTTOM-LINE
• Studies have not proven this to be an effective way to find early breast cancer. Thermography does not replace mammograms and is not licensed for breast cancer screening in Canada.

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