

## Breast Imaging

Whilst breast cancer may at some time affect between 1 in 10 to 1 in 15 women (less commonly men), early detection has been shown to prevent many deaths.

Those patients with a family history of breast cancer, or patients with symptoms of breast disease eg., lump or pain in the breast, discharge from the nipple etc., should be investigated by an appropriate expert.

### Procedures

#### → MAMMOGRAPHY

Mammography (breast x-ray) using a special x-ray machine is very good at finding breast cancer at an early stage, often before there are any symptoms or signs of disease. Such a discovery often allows curative treatment without the need for removal of the whole breast.

Modern equipment uses relatively small x-ray doses and the potential benefit far outweighs any conceivable side effect.

For the best mammogram pictures it is necessary to compress (squeeze) the breast by a specific amount of pressure. Some patients find this uncomfortable but it is essential to obtain clear films. The compression is only applied for a short time and both breasts can usually be examined in about 15 minutes. If it is too painful please let the technician know immediately.

Dusting (talcum) powder or deodorant should not be applied to the breast or armpit on the day of the examination as it can cause false appearances on the films.

Some patients may experience discomfort for a day or so after the examination.

On completion of the scan, the films will be studied in detail by the radiologist who will report on the findings for your referring doctor. You should make an appointment to discuss the findings with your doctor.

It is extremely important to bring any previous mammograms with you on the day so they can be used for comparison.

#### → ULTRASOUND SCANNING

Scanning of the breast with ultrasound (high energy sound waves) gives very good pictures of lumps your doctor can feel in the breast and may better characterise a possible abnormality seen at mammography.

In many patients under 35 years of age ultrasound scanning should be the initial test performed and may be sufficient for an accurate diagnosis.

A Medicare rebate is available for ultrasound examinations.

#### → MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING (MRI)

For patients with silicone implants and where leakage is suspected, MRI is recommended.

Unfortunately there are tight restrictions on Medicare rebates for this test and few practices have the necessary equipment.

#### → DUCTOGRAPHY

This is occasionally needed where patients have bleeding or discharge from the nipple. A painless injection of an iodine-containing compound is made into the discharging duct. Mammogram films are then taken to reveal the inside lining of the duct.

### Keeping films

All x-ray films should be kept so that these may be compared with each new examination. It is often a minor change in the appearance that leads to correct and early diagnosis.

### Charges

A Medicare rebate is payable for patients who have symptoms of breast cancer or who have a family history of breast cancer. For patients with a family history, some experts advise mammography examinations should commence at 35 years of age and be repeated at annual intervals. For women over 40, mammography has been shown to improve the outcome of breast cancer.

Please check cost with the staff at the time of booking an appointment.

### Remember

While breast x-rays detect most breast cancers, they do not find all of them. It is important that you examine your own breasts every month and have regular breast checks with your doctor.

If you find a lump in your breast or notice any other changes, you should contact your doctor without delay.

PLEASE BRING ANY PREVIOUS X-RAYS OR SCANS WITH YOU ON THE DAY OF YOUR EXAMINATION.

CONFIRM ANY PREPARATION REQUIRED WITH STAFF WHEN MAKING YOUR APPOINTMENT.

## Putting People in the Picture

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# Your doctor may request to go filmless

**With the growing use of digital imaging, Pittwater Radiology is giving doctors the opportunity to not receive hard copy films and to replace them with electronic reports and images – in other words, go “filmless”.**

If your referring doctor elects to go “filmless,” once you have completed your medical imaging examination, you will no longer have to wait for x-ray films. The images will be sent electronically to your doctor’s computer together with a report from our Radiologist. If you require films in the future, all films are stored digitally and can be requested at anytime with 24 hour notice.

BREAST IMAGING IS PERFORMED AT OUR DEE WHY,  
FRENCHS FOREST & MONA VALE CLINICS

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