

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES, MAMMOGRAPHY, AND MAMMOGRAPHY ACCESS

If you're a woman with a disability, you're just as likely to get breast cancer as other women. Having a disability doesn't keep you from getting breast cancer — breast cancer can happen to you!

To find breast cancer early,

- Know how your breasts usually look. Learn what is normal for you.
- Report any changes to your health care provider right away.
- Get regular breast cancer screening exams — both:
 - ✓ clinical breast exams (when your health care provider looks at and feels your breasts and underarms) AND
 - ✓ mammography exams (an X-ray that makes an image of the breast).

What is a mammogram?

- A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast.
- A mammogram can find breast cancer early.
- A mammogram X-ray uses very little radiation.
- A mammogram may be uncomfortable for a few seconds, but it is usually not painful.

- Schedule your mammogram the week after your period, when your breasts should be less tender.
- Mammograms are not perfect. So you should also get a yearly clinical breast exam by a health care provider.

Why you may be avoiding getting a mammogram

- You feel overwhelmed by your disability or you forget to make breast health important.
- You may think that because you already have a disability, chances are you wouldn't be given another challenge like breast cancer.
- You may fear the mammogram will find something wrong with your breasts.



source: National Cancer Institute,
Author: Rhoda Baer (Photographer)

- You may have had a bad experience getting your mammogram in the past.
- You find the mammogram painful.
- The staff was not friendly and did not understand your disability.
- You are concerned about how to pay for a mammogram.
- There is a lack of transportation.
- The facility and/or mammography machine were not accessible.
- You are not sure what to expect from a mammogram.

Despite these challenges, it's important to catch breast cancer early.

Having a disability can take a lot of time, but you need to find the time to take care of your breast health too. You should do all you can to look for breast cancer regularly. If found early enough, breast cancer is curable — in fact, it is one of the most curable types of cancers!

Before getting your mammogram, think about access (whether in a mammography facility or mobile mammography van)

When calling for a mammogram appointment, ask if the mammography facility is FDA-approved. Tell the scheduling staff about your disability so the mammography staff will be better prepared to help you during the appointment. Tell them if you:

- Use a walker, cane, wheelchair, or scooter
- Need extra time and/or help with: completing forms, undressing and/or dressing, positioning, sitting up and/or standing, lifting and/or moving your arms, and/or moving from your wheelchair or scooter to a chair if needed
- Have movement or other physical issues that may make the mammogram hard to do

Ask the scheduling staff if you can:

- Bring someone to the appointment to help with dressing/undressing and/or hold you during the exam
- Stay seated in your wheelchair or scooter during your mammogram if needed

Ask the scheduling staff about issues about access to and within the mammography site that might concern you, including the:

- Parking lot or garage
- Main building entrance
- Elevator
- Dressing room
- Mammography room and machine
- Rest room

To help you prepare for your exam:

- Speak with your health care provider about anti-spastic (movement) and/or pain medication before the mammogram.
- Wear a two-piece outfit with a shirt that is easy to remove.
- Do not wear deodorant, powders, or lotions on or near your breasts and underarms.
- Bring your insurance card.
- Make sure you have an understanding of your family history of breast cancer.
- Know the dates of your prior mammograms.
- Know where you received earlier mammograms and your doctor's name/address.

The day of the mammogram, think about how you can help get a good mammogram:

- Bring information about your medical history and medicines (including any recent changes), any pain or breast problems, and the date of your last period.
- Getting a clear X-ray makes a mammogram successful, and it's important to find a good position. Remember the position and tell your health care provider the next time what has worked for you before.
- Have the health care provider place notes in your chart so each year is not a new "experience".
- Bring someone to help you undress and dress if needed. Also, you might need to bring someone to help hold you during the mammogram if the staff are unable to do this.

continued.....

The day of the mammogram, think about how you can help get a good mammogram:

- To get close to the mammography machine, your wheelchair needs to have arms that can be taken off. Before you go to your appointment, make sure that the wheelchair you use that day has arms that can be taken off, so you won't have to move to another chair.
- Ask when you will get your results.

After the mammogram:

- Do not think because you have not heard from your health care provider, that your mammogram is normal.
- If you have not heard from your health care provider, make sure to call for your results!

Services are available that might be able to help you pay for a mammogram, if you qualify:

- Medicare, Medicaid, and most private health insurance plans now cover mammogram costs under the Affordable Care Act.
- The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program provides breast and cervical cancer early detection testing to women without health insurance for free or at very low cost. To see if you qualify and learn about local services provided, please contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-CDC INFO (1-800-232-4636) or online at www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp.
- Call the Komen Breast Care Helpline (1-877 Go KOMEN or 1-877-465-6636) to learn about low-cost mammography programs in your area.



American Association on Health and Disability
www.aahd.us



877-465-6636 (hotline)
ww5.komen.org

For more information, please contact AAHD Komen Project Director at 301-545-6140 x203 or visit our website at www.aahd.us

This publication was made possible by a 2016-2018 grant from Susan G. Komen®.

© 2016 American Association on Health & Disability

American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD) provides the materials and links for general information, education and awareness purposes only. Although every effort is made to assure that information is accurate and current, knowledge in the field of disability and medicine is changing often, and all data is subject to change without notice. AAHD makes no representations or warranties and assumes no responsibility or liability as to the accuracy, completeness, reliability or usefulness of any information contained in this document. Neither AAHD nor any parties, who supply information to AAHD, make any warranty concerning the accuracy of any information in this document.

