

Making a well- informed decision

The early detection programme for breast cancer



Why are women offered a mammogram through the quality controlled screening programme?

Women between 50 and 69 years of age range are at the highest risk of developing breast cancer. Studies have shown that women who participate in regular quality controlled mammography screenings can be saved from dying of breast cancer.

No other method of detecting breast cancer at an early stage has shown this type of results.

A mammogram through the screening programme is used to detect breast cancer at an early stage. It is therefore aimed at all women in a certain age range who show no visible signs of breast cancer.

Every 2 years, women between 50 and 69 years of age are offered this examination.

To ensure the examination meets the necessary high quality standards, it is only performed at specialised facilities (screening facilities) approved for the German mammography screening programme. Physicians and radiologists must meet special professional requirements. The methods and results of the examinations are routinely reviewed and evaluated.

Costs for the mammography screening programme are covered by health insurance. Please consult your insurer about the costs beforehand if you are privately insured.

Are mammography screenings a sensible form of early detection?

Mammography involves an x-ray of the breast. It also detects very small malignant changes in the breast tissue. It even works for particularly dense breast tissue.

About 75 percent of carcinomas detected are less than 2 centimetres in size and have not yet spread to the lymph nodes. You typically won't be able to feel carcinomas yet at this stage.

The size of the tumour and how far it has spread to the lymph nodes are among the key factors in your prognosis. If it is detected at an early stage, you will also still have the option of availing of breast-conserving surgery and less invasive medical treatment.

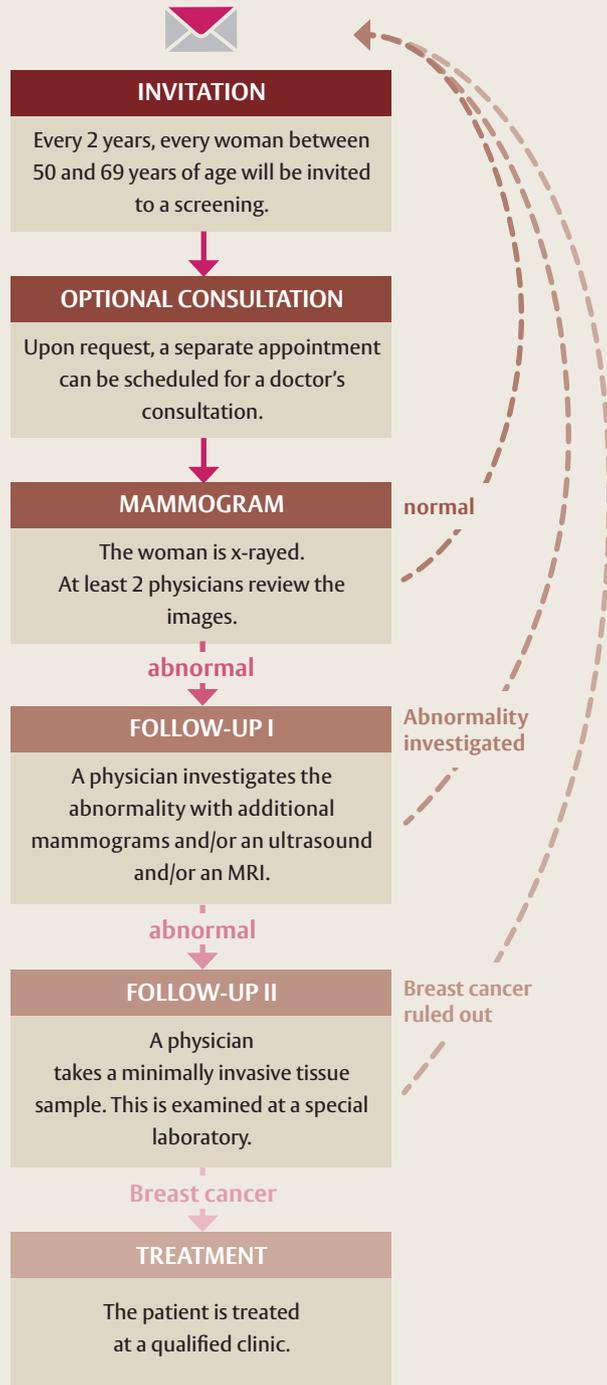
Out of 1,000 women regularly participating in the mammography screening programme, 2 to 6 women will be saved from dying from breast cancer.

Every method of early detection also has its drawbacks. Abnormalities need to be investigated with additional tests. This can cause the woman temporary distress.

Early detection further detects small tumours or pre-cancerous cells which otherwise would not have been detected, and thus not treated (overdiagnoses/overtherapies). One reason for this is that there are tumours which only grow slowly or don't grow at all. There is no definite way of determining whether a detected tumour will continue to grow. During a patient consultation, treatment will therefore be recommended.

Out of 1,000 women regularly participating in the mammography screening process, 9 to 12 women may be overdiagnosed.

Mammography screening procedure



How often are women invited to follow-up examinations?

Two specially trained physicians always review the x-ray images from the mammography screening separately. This also includes previous images. Getting a second opinion is a special feature of the mammography screening.

If the physicians detect an abnormality in a mammogram, the images will be discussed in a joint meeting with another specialist from the mammography screening programme. A final assessment will be made during this meeting.

If there are any doubts whatsoever after this assessment, the woman will be asked to return for additional tests shortly afterwards. This includes another mammogram and/or an ultrasound and/or an ultrasound scan and/or a magnetic resonance imaging scan (MRI) of the breast. In most cases the abnormality can be classified as benign.

In some cases, breast cancer cannot be ruled out. This will then require a biopsy. A minimally invasive needle biopsy will then be performed. The tissue sample will be examined at a specialised laboratory. The results will be available within a few days. About half of the biopsies will confirm breast cancer.

Out of 1,000 women examined through the mammography screening programme ...

- 970 women will have normal results.
- 30 women will have abnormal results.
 - ▶ 12 of these women will have a biopsy.
 - ▶ 6 of these women will be diagnosed with breast cancer after the biopsy.

The German quality controlled mammography screening programme detects about 16,600 malignant tumours every year.

Are there alternatives to the mammography screening programme?

Some women will not be offered other options for early detection of breast cancer such as an ultrasound or a magnetic resonance imaging scan (MRI). It has not been proven as to whether this type of examination reduces the risk of dying from breast cancer. These types of examinations can show more abnormalities, which will require additional testing or biopsies before they can be determined as benign, than a mammogram.



Can breast cancer also be detected in between two mammograms?

Participating regularly in mammogram screenings cannot prevent breast cancer from developing. Breast cancer will be detected in about 2 out of 1,000 women with normal mammograms before they receive their next reminder. Normally this is cancer which grew after the last examination. In rare cases, tumours can also remain undetected by mammograms or be overlooked despite all the diligence shown.

That is why it's important to immediately consult a doctor if you notice changes in your breasts.

How high is the radiation dose?

Mammography involves the use of x-rays. The radiation dose used in the mammography screening is kept to a minimum and must not exceed the defined values. Compressing the breast during the examination allows for a particularly low radiation dose to be applied. The level of pressure exerted does not cause cancer.

Despite this, it cannot be ruled out that the radiation dose of regular x-rays can contribute to cancer forming in very rare cases.

The digital equipment used meets the highest quality standards and is inspected daily.

Mammography screening programme consultation



You are entitled to a personal consultation with a physician from the mammography screening programme. During this consultation, you will have the opportunity to discuss your questions about the mammography screening with a qualified professional.

Please schedule a separate appointment through the main office. You will find the contact information in your invitation or at www.mammo-programm.de/termin/.

MAKING A WELL-INFORMED DECISION

You have the option of participating in a quality controlled mammogram to detect breast cancer at an early stage.

It's very important to us to educate you about the benefits and drawbacks of detecting breast cancer early on so that you are able to make a well-informed decision for yourself.

For more information about the mammography screening programme please visit:



www.mammo-programm.de
fragen.mammo-programm.de

PRACTICE STAMP



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