

Getting ready for your mammogram

A checklist from Mammo Express - mammo.express

☐ 1. Skip deodorant, perfume and powder that morning

Don't wear deodorant, perfume or powder on the day of your appointment. These can show up as white spots on the X-ray and can mean repeating images. Bring your deodorant and put it on afterwards -- most locations expect it.

☐ 2. Time it away from your period if you can

Breasts are often more tender the week before and during your period. If you still have periods, booking the week after usually makes the exam more comfortable. If that is not practical, it is far better to go than to wait.

☐ 3. Wear a two-piece outfit

You undress from the waist up, so a top with trousers or a skirt is easier than a dress. Many locations give you a gown that opens at the front.

☐ 4. Bring or forward your previous images

If you have had a mammogram somewhere else, ask that facility to send the images to your new location beforehand. Comparing this year against last year is one of the most useful things a radiologist can do.

☐ 5. Tell the technologist what is going on

Say if you have breast implants, are breastfeeding, might be pregnant, have had surgery, or have noticed a lump or change. It changes how the images are taken -- and a new lump or change means you need a diagnostic exam, not a screening one.

☐ 6. Know what it feels like

Your breast is pressed firmly between two plates for a few seconds while the image is taken. Most people find it uncomfortable; some find it painful. It is over quickly -- the whole appointment is usually around twenty minutes.

☐ 7. Expect a letter -- including your breast density

You will get your results in plain language. Since September 2024 the FDA requires every facility in the US to tell you whether your breasts are dense. About half of women over 40 have dense tissue, which can hide cancers on a mammogram and is itself a risk factor. It is information, not alarm -- discuss it with a clinician.

If you have noticed a lump or any change, you need a diagnostic exam, not a screening one.

Contact a clinician. Mammo Express is a scheduling service, not a medical provider.

Sources: CDC, FDA, National Cancer Institute. Links at mammo.express/prepare