



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Getting a Screening Mammogram at MSK

This information explains screening mammograms at MSK and how to schedule one. It also explains what to expect after your appointment.

Having your screening mammogram at MSK

At MSK, anyone who needs a screening mammogram will get tomosynthesis (toh-moh-SIN-thuh-sis), also called 3D screening mammography. This technology is better than other types of mammograms because it finds more cancers. The pictures it takes are so detailed that most people will not need to come back for more images.

3D mammograms take more time to read and interpret. This means you will not get the results of your mammogram during your imaging appointment.

You can get a screening mammogram if:

- You have no issues with your breasts, such as a lump, nipple discharge, or focal pain (pain in one area of your breast).
- Your most recent mammogram, ultrasound, or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) was either negative or had benign

(not cancerous) results,

OR

- Your most recent mammogram, ultrasound or MRI showed suspicious results, but you have completed surgical treatment.

Screening mammograms are for people without any breast symptoms. You are eligible to have a screening mammogram even if you have had cancer. Visit *Breast Cancer Screening Guidelines* (www.mskcc.org/cancer-conditions/breast-cancer#screening) to learn about your risk and when to get screened.

If you do have symptoms, such as breast lumps or discharge from your breasts, tell your healthcare provider. You may be able to get a diagnostic mammogram and an ultrasound to evaluate your symptoms.

If you are lactating (producing breast milk), be sure to tell your healthcare provider. You should breastfeed or express your milk before your mammogram. You should empty your breasts as much as possible.

Scheduling your screening mammogram

If your MSK healthcare provider is ordering your mammogram:

- Their office will schedule your mammogram for you. You can also call 844-822-9443 to make an appointment.

If your healthcare provider outside of MSK is ordering your mammogram:

1. Ask them to send us the prescription and their name, address, and phone number. They can email this to nonmskrx@mskcc.org or fax it to 646-227-7259.
2. Call 844-822-9443 to schedule your mammogram appointment.

If you do not have a healthcare provider or can't get your screening mammogram prescription:

- Call 844-822-9443 to schedule your mammogram appointment.

You may have had mammograms, breast imaging, or other exams done somewhere else. If so, tell us where you had them when you call to schedule so we can request copies for you. This will let us compare your new results to your older ones.

A screening mammogram is different than a breast ultrasound. You must have a prescription to have a breast ultrasound.

What you can expect after your screening mammogram

After your appointment, we will send you a letter with the results of your screening mammogram by mail. Results are usually available in MSK MyChart, our patient portal, within 1 to 3 business days.

If you do not have a MSK MyChart account, you can visit mskmychart.mskcc.org to sign up.

If you get a call about needing more images, it does not mean you have cancer. It means the radiologist wants to see an area more clearly. A radiologist is a doctor who specializes in imaging tests.

You will then be scheduled for a diagnostic ultrasound or a diagnostic mammogram, which takes more detailed images of a specific area in your breast. Sometimes you will be scheduled for both. Most of the time your mammogram will be found to be normal after these additional images are taken.

Screening mammogram follow-up tests

Out of every 100 people who get a screening mammogram, 90 will have normal results.



Only **10** people will need to come back for **more testing**



6 of them will have **normal mammogram results**



2 should have a **needle biopsy**



2 will be asked to come back for a **follow-up exam** in 6 months

Figure 1. Screening mammogram follow-up tests (Source: mammographysaveslives.org)

You may need to have a diagnostic mammogram, which is a more detailed image than a screening mammogram. During a diagnostic mammogram, different methods are used to focus on a specific part of your breast. The images taken during a diagnostic mammogram help your radiologist decide if you will need a biopsy (removal of a small tissue sample).

Key points to remember

- Screening mammograms can find cancer before you have symptoms.
- Breast tomosynthesis, also called 3D screening mammography, finds more cancers than other mammogram technology.

- You may have a screening mammogram even if you have been treated for breast cancer.
- Your mammogram results will likely be available in MSK MyChart, our patient portal, within 1 to 3 business days. We will also send you the results by mail.
- We will call you if you need more images. It does not mean you have cancer.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Getting a Screening Mammogram at MSK - Last updated on July 7, 2026
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center