

## What Is The Difference Between A Diagnostic Mammogram And A Screening Mammogram?

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast. While **screening mammograms** are routinely administered to detect breast cancer in women who have no apparent symptoms, diagnostic mammograms are used after suspicious results on a screening mammogram or after some **signs of breast cancer** alert the physician to check the tissue.

Such signs may include:

- A lump
- Breast pain
- Nipple discharge
- Thickening of skin on the breast
- Changes in the size or shape of the breast

A diagnostic mammogram can help determine if these symptoms are indicative of the presence of cancer.

As compared to screening mammograms, diagnostic mammograms provide a more detailed x-ray of the breast using specialized techniques. They are also used in special circumstances, such as for patients with breast implants.

## What's Involved In A Diagnostic Mammogram?

If your doctor prescribes a diagnostic mammogram, realize that it will take longer than a normal **screening mammogram**, because more x-rays are taken, providing views of the breast from multiple vantage points. The radiologist administering the test may also zoom in on a specific area of the breast where there is a suspicion of an abnormality. This will give your doctor a better image of the tissue to arrive at an accurate **diagnosis**.

In addition to finding **tumors** that are too small to feel, mammograms may also spot **ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS)**. These are abnormal cells in the lining of a breast duct, which may become invasive cancer in some women.

