

McLeod

Breast Health Center

Screening Options for Women with Dense Breasts

Understanding Breast Density:

Breast density refers to the proportion of glandular and connective tissue compared to fat in the breast. Women with dense breasts have a higher proportion of glandular and connective tissue, which can make it more challenging to detect abnormalities on mammograms. For patients with breast density of category C or D indicated on your mammogram report, it is essential to understand the screening options available to you.

Screening Options for Women with Dense Breasts:

1. **Mammography/ Digital Breast Tomosynthesis (DBT):** Mammography is the standard screening tool for breast cancer detection. DBT is also known as 3D mammography and is an advanced imaging technique that takes multiple X-ray images of the breast from different angles. It can improve cancer detection rates, particularly in women with dense breasts, by providing clearer images and reducing the overlap of breast tissue. All mammograms performed at McLeod Health utilize advanced 3D technology.
2. **Breast Ultrasound:** Breast ultrasound uses sound waves to create images of the breast tissue. It is often used as a supplemental screening tool for women with dense breasts or those with a higher risk of breast cancer. Ultrasound can help detect abnormalities that may not be visible on mammograms, especially in dense breast tissue. McLeod Regional Medical Center uses a 3D Whole Breast Ultrasound System to provide a more comfortable experience for you.
3. **Breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI):** Breast MRI uses magnetic fields and radio waves to enhance contrast creating detailed images of the blood flow in breast tissue. It is the most sensitive imaging test for detecting breast cancer but is typically reserved for women at high risk or those with certain medical indications, as it can be more costly and time-consuming than mammography or ultrasound. Abbreviated MRI is offered at McLeod Regional Medical Center to reduce costs and inconvenience while increasing access to women at an increased risk of breast cancer.

Factors to Consider:

- **Individual Risk Factors:** Your healthcare provider will consider your individual risk factors, including breast density, personal and family history of breast cancer, and other medical conditions, when recommending screening options.
- **Preferences and Comfort:** Discuss your preferences and comfort level with different screening methods with your healthcare provider. They can help you make an informed decision based on your unique circumstances.

- **Screening Frequency:** Depending on your risk factors and screening results, your healthcare provider may recommend regular screening at shorter intervals or additional imaging tests to ensure thorough breast cancer detection.

Take Charge of Your Breast Health:

- **Know Your Breast Density:** Ask your healthcare provider about your breast density and how it may impact your screening options.
- **Stay Informed:** Stay informed about breast cancer screening guidelines and advancements in screening technology. Advocate for yourself and discuss any concerns or questions with your healthcare providers.
- **Follow Recommendations:** Follow your healthcare provider's recommendations for breast cancer screening, including any supplemental screening options deemed necessary based on your breast density and risk factors.

Remember, early detection is key to successful breast cancer treatment. By understanding your screening options and working closely with your healthcare providers, you can take proactive steps to protect your breast health.

McLeod Breast Health Center

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