

# Palm Beach Obstetrics & Gynecology, PA

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## Mammography

Mammography is an x-ray technique used to study the breasts. It is the best method we as doctors have for finding breast cancer at an early stage when cancer treatment is most successful. Sometime between the ages of 35 to 40, mammography should be done so that a baseline film would be on file. Between the ages of 40 to 50, mammograms should be done every 1-2 years and, after age 50, mammograms should become a regular part of your health care and be done annually, as should a pap smear and gynecologic examination.

Some patient's insurance coverage will determine where the mammogram should be done. For those patients who can freely choose where their mammogram will be done, we recommend that it be done locally so that if there is any question with the report, the doctors in this office can read the mammogram and discuss the test with the radiologist who did the test. If you have any questions as to where the mammogram should be done, we will gladly recommend the appropriate facility.

In the past, there was some concern about the amount of radiation to which a patient was exposed during a mammogram. Improved equipment and techniques now result in only minimal exposure, with no significant increase in the risk of developing breast cancer in the future because of repeated mammograms. Nowadays, a mammogram in most cases exposes a woman to less than 1 rad of x-ray, which is a very low dose - only 0.1% of the level of radiation received naturally from the environment over the course of a year. A small percentage of lumps may not be detected by mammograms. That is why you should not give up monthly self-breast exams just because you are having regular mammograms. In addition, you should not give up an annual breast exam done by our office.

Please, when we request that you get a mammogram, schedule it quickly after your office visit. Our office has no way of determining whether you have had the mammogram done until you come back for your next exam and/or a copy of the report is in your chart. Please make sure that when you go for your mammogram at the Radiology office that you specifically tell the personnel there to send a copy of the mammogram report to our office.

We also recommend that when you make your mammogram appointment, you ask for the courtesy of having the mammogram read by a radiologist when the test is complete. By doing this, your appointment will be scheduled when a radiologist (not a technician) is present. Insist that the results be discussed with you before you leave. We mention this because many of the mammogram centers in the area have technicians perform the mammogram. Radiologists will read these tests at some later date. There are times when the radiologist needs additional films. You are then called back to the facility to get these additional films.