

Mammography Ordering Guidelines

Outlined below are some simple guidelines to follow when ordering mammograms.

First and foremost, the American Cancer Society and National Cancer Institute both recommend annual screening mammography beginning at age 40. In women at higher risk for breast cancer (eg. first-degree relative with pre-menopausal breast cancer), we currently recommend screening 10 years earlier (down to age 25) than the age at which their relative was diagnosed.

Here are some helpful hints to help you determine whether a mammogram should be a screening or a diagnostic exam.

1. Screening exams are to be done on patients with no current symptoms and no history of prior breast cancer.
 - Are there any current symptoms?
 - If yes, then the study is diagnostic.
 - Is there a history of breast cancer?
 - If yes, even if no current symptoms, it will always be a diagnostic study.

2. Is there a history of prior symptoms and/or breast biopsy?
 - If yes, was cancer found?
 - If yes, it will always be a diagnostic study.
 - If no, are there current breast symptoms?
 - If there are current symptoms, then it is a diagnostic exam.
 - If no current symptoms, then it is a screening exam.

3. If you are scheduling a follow-up exam, at less than routine screening intervals(annual), then study is diagnostic.