

3 things you need to know before your mammogram

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Featured topic and speaker

Feeling anxious about an upcoming mammogram? You're not alone. In this video, Claudia Perez, DO, a breast surgical oncologist at Rush University Medical Center, shares:

- Why mammograms are so important for early breast cancer detection
- What to do before your appointment
- Common reasons patients are called back for additional imaging
- How to communicate with your mammography team
- When screening should begin and why staying on schedule matters

Whether you're getting your first mammogram or keeping up with routine screenings, this expert guidance can help you feel more informed and confident about your breast health.

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Speaker

- **Claudia Perez, DO**, breast surgical oncologist, Rush University Medical Center

Transcript

Dr. Perez: So let's be honest. No one's looking forward to a mammogram. They can be very scary. But here are the three most important things to know before you go.

I'm Dr. Claudia Perez. I'm a breast surgical oncologist at Rush University Medical Center. And I'm an AMA member. Mammograms are really the gold standard imaging for breast cancer. We find things very early on mammograms. We are able to see things like calcifications, asymmetries, distortions, lumps before you can even feel them. So mammograms literally save lives because of early detection.

A mammogram is incredibly easy to get. It can be free. It does not require a prescription or an order or a referral. You should start getting mammograms at age 40. You really just want to be consistent and not be delayed or overdue. So on the mammogram day, always arrive a little bit early so you don't feel rushed or stressed. We instruct our patients to avoid wearing deodorant and wearing lotion so that we can do a perfect image directly on the skin, without any layer on top of it.

During your mammogram visit, when your technician is asking you questions, don't be afraid to speak up. They want to know about you. So if you have any new changes, if you have any history that's important, please bring it up at the time. For example, I have breast implants. I had a biopsy three years ago. Last year, it really hurt when they positioned me this way. Be really communicative with the tech.

I think the hardest part of a mammogram might be waiting for the results. But just be reassured that your doctor will follow up with you. It's not uncommon for women to get called back after their screening mammograms. Sometimes we need to get more pictures to get a better look at something we see. It does not mean you need a biopsy. It does not mean you have a diagnosis of breast cancer. It just means we need additional imaging.

Mammograms are scary to most women. But they don't have to be. I think that if you go into it thinking of it as prevention, you're really doing your part to be proactive. If you have any questions at all about your mammogram, talk to your doctor.



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