



Mammography Services at Associated Physicians, LLP

At Associated Physicians we are happy to offer **screening mammography** as one of our portfolio of services designed to help keep you healthy.

What is a Mammogram?

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast using special X-ray equipment that shows the detail of the breast tissue. Associated Physicians uses only digital equipment for mammograms. By carefully comparing these breast pictures to your prior mammograms, a radiologist (a physician specially trained to read X-rays) can identify abnormalities.

What is the Difference Between a Screening Mammogram and a Diagnostic Mammogram?

A Screening Mammogram is a routine exam to screen for any cancers, cysts, calcifications, or any other pathology that may require further imaging or care. It is a yearly exam performed when you and your doctor agree that you are having no problems, concerns, or changes occurring with your breasts. It involves taking four pictures, two of each breast. If you have breast implants, it involves eight pictures, four of each breast.

If you or your physician feel a lump, you are experiencing continuing pain in a focused area, have nipple discharge, or are experiencing any other changes in your breasts, you will need a Diagnostic Mammogram. A Diagnostic Mammogram includes a Screening Mammogram, *plus* additional images taken of a specific problem area for further evaluation. Diagnostic studies need to be done at a breast center where an on-site radiologist is able to read them at the time of your visit. Breast centers also have other modalities available, such as ultrasound. Ultrasound is a very common test that uses sound waves and gives the radiologist more information in some circumstances, such as when a cyst is present. The radiologist will review all mammography and ultrasound images at the time of your appointment and you will be informed of the results before you leave.

Preparing For Your Mammogram

Whenever possible, it is preferable for you to have a manual breast exam with your physician up to three weeks prior to your mammogram. Having this manual exam and an opportunity to speak with your physician assures that you are scheduled for the appropriate type of mammogram. If any concerns arise during your exam, we will assist you in scheduling a diagnostic mammogram at a breast center.

The Day of Your Mammogram

Avoid wearing any deodorant or powder under your arms or breasts. The residue from these products can show up on the films and mimic something that could be problematic.

Please arrive 10-15 minutes early to get checked in and complete necessary paperwork. Your mammogram appointment will take about 20 to 30 minutes. A specially trained radiologic technologist will take the pictures. She will place each breast between two smooth, flat plates and apply gentle but firm compression. Each compression will only take a few seconds. For some patients, the compression may be slightly uncomfortable, but it is necessary in order to achieve the highest quality pictures. Some women like to take Tylenol 20-30 minutes before their appointment.

After Your Mammogram

Associated Physicians will send you the results of your mammogram via mail within one week of your exam. If the radiologist who reads your films requests additional imaging, one of our care team members will call you at your preferred number and help you set up an appointment at the UW Medical Foundation or at the UWHC Breast Center where the radiologist will perform a diagnostic mammogram or ultrasound. Additional images assist the radiologist in diagnosing what could be one of several things, many of which are benign. Often, the radiologist simply needs more detail or greater magnification of a specific area.

How Often Do I Need a Mammogram?

The American Cancer Society recommends an annual mammogram starting at age 40 unless you and your physician determine otherwise. Early detection is a key factor in achieving positive outcomes. Please remember that monthly breast self-exams help you recognize changes in your breasts and any new abnormalities. We recommend a yearly physical breast examination by a health care provider as part of your complete breast health program.