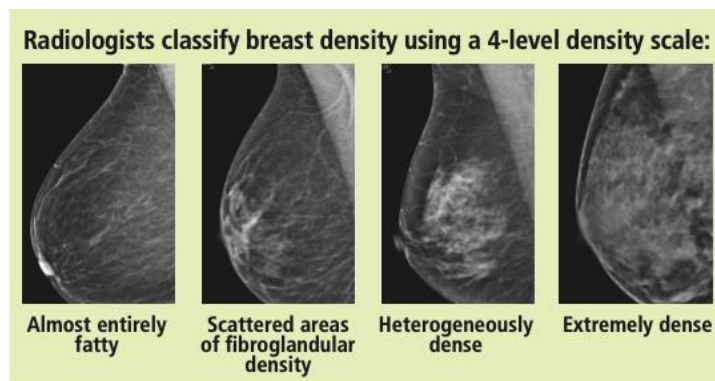


Your breast x-ray (mammogram) shows that your breasts are dense. This means that your breasts have a lot of fibrous or glandular tissue in them, but not much fat.

What is breast density?

The doctor who looks at your breast x-ray says how dense your breasts are. There are four types of breasts (see picture below):

1. A – mostly fat
2. B – some density
3. C – medium density
4. D – mostly dense



C and D are called “dense.” This can only be seen on X-ray.

C can make small lumps harder to see. D can make the X-ray not as precise at finding cancer.

Why does it matter?

Factors like age, family history, and lifestyle, can increase the risk of getting breast cancer during your life.

Having dense breasts can raise your risk, too. But, the increase in risk is smaller than other factors.

Dense breasts can make it harder to spot cancer on a breast x-ray. Dense parts are white on x-ray and so are lumps.

How common is it to have dense breasts?

Half of women older than 40 have dense breasts.

What can I do if mammogram shows my breasts are dense?

Be alert, not alarmed. Talk with your doctor if you have other known risk factors or have any other concerns.

It is common for women to have dense breasts. You cannot change this risk factor like you can others.

Other tests are available. But, using other tests is not recommended if you do not have other risk factors or symptoms.

Breast ultrasounds or MRIs are two tests that might improve the detection of cancer in dense breasts.

A breast ultrasound uses sound waves to take 3D pictures of the breast tissue. It may find cancer in dense breasts that a mammogram may not.

Who should get a breast ultrasound?

- No current signs of breast cancer
- Have C or D breast density
- Not already getting a breast MRI
- Do not have a pacemaker or defibrillator
- Your doctor says you are a candidate

A breast MRI uses a magnetic field to help doctors see inside the breast to check for cancer.

Who should get a breast MRI?

- At high risk for breast cancer based on risk factors
- Those who have the breast cancer gene
- Women with dense breasts
- Do not have metal implants
- Your doctor says you are a candidate

What are the risks of doing other testing, like ultrasound or MRI?

- False positive results: says cancer is present when it is not
- Overdiagnosis: being told you have a condition that will never cause any problems in your lifetime
- Overtreatment: getting treatment for a problem that would never cause symptoms
- Distress
- Fear
- Worry
- Side-effects from the tests

Some insurances may not cover breast ultrasound or MRI. Coverage may also be subject to co-pays or deductibles.

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