



Mammography at HRRMC

Mammography uses low-dose X-rays to examine the breasts. Mammograms aid in the early detection and diagnosis of breast disease. Most screening mammograms are normal. Potential abnormalities are found in about 6 to 8 percent of patients, according to the Cleveland Clinic, and after further examination most of these questionable abnormalities are found to be normal or non-cancerous tissue. Mammograms can detect cancer in its early stages, even before a lump can be felt, and when treatment can be most successful.

Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center offers **two types of mammography** for breast care:

- **Digital two-dimensional (2-D) mammograms**
- **Digital three-dimensional (3-D) mammograms, also known as Tomosynthesis**

Both 2-D and 3-D mammograms can be used for either screening or diagnostic purposes. Screening (also known as routine) mammograms look for breast disease in women who do not have any symptoms. Diagnostic mammograms are done on women who do exhibit symptoms, such as a breast lump.

What is the difference between 2-D and 3-D digital mammography?

Tomosynthesis, or 3-D digital mammography, is a new FDA-approved technique for breast screening. The tomosynthesis machine at HRRMC performs 2-D as well as 3-D digital mammography. From a patient's perspective, having a 2-D or 3-D mammogram is very similar. With both tests, the breast must be compressed. The difference is in the number of views obtained.

A standard 2-D digital mammogram takes two views of each breast, one from the top and one from the side. These images are flat. A 3-D digital mammogram takes a series of pictures of thin slices of the breast from different angles. Computer software is used to reconstruct a 3-D image of the breast by combining these pictures.

A doctor can "scroll through" these images of your breast to better see the layers of breast tissue that may appear abnormal on a standard 2-D mammogram. Tomosynthesis may see cancers that were hidden by normal tissue that overlaps on the 2-D mammogram. The 3-D mammogram will be completed at the same time as the standard 2-D mammogram.

What are the possible benefits of 3-D mammography over 2-D mammography?

- **Fewer call backs** for additional screening and testing.
- **Clearer imaging** shows the inner structure of the breast without the traditional distortion and shadowing.
- **Faster detection** as thin layers of tissue are shown separately and suspicious lesions from a traditional 2-D image can be ruled out as benign.
- **Improved imaging** for dense breast tissue.
- Having a 3-D image for screening or diagnostic purposes may improve your health **by finding cancers not seen on standard 2-D imaging.**

What are the possible risks?

According to the National Cancer Institute, mammograms require very small doses of radiation. The radiation levels of both 2-D and 3-D mammograms are well below the exposure levels for imaging established by the American College of Radiology. The risk of developing cancer from imaging-related radiation is associated with radiation doses much higher than what you will receive for this study. The benefits of mammography, however, nearly always outweigh the potential harm from the radiation exposure. *Women should always let their medical provider and the mammography technician know if there is any possibility that they are pregnant, because radiation can harm a growing fetus.*

Since 2-D and 3-D mammography, like many medical exams, are not 100 percent accurate, there is the risk of false positives which may lead to additional imaging or unnecessary treatment, such as a biopsy. There is also the risk of a false negative, i.e. that breast cancer may not be seen on the exam results.

Will insurance pay for tomosynthesis (3-D mammography)?

Tomosynthesis is a new technology and health insurance providers may be in the process of developing their policy for payment of this procedure, whether it is for screening or diagnostic purposes.

As of January 1, 2015, Medicare and some private insurance companies have approved coverage of 3-D mammograms. The portion due from you, the patient, will be based on the coverage of your policy. Any unpaid balance left from Medicare and/or your insurance carrier will be your responsibility. **We recommend that you call your insurance company to determine whether this procedure is covered by your insurance plan.**

Currently, Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center is billing \$66 for tomosynthesis. This charge is in addition to the 2-D digital mammography charge. If you have questions regarding options for payment and/or possible resources if you are unable to pay, please call Patient Financial Services at 719-530-2475.

Please note: The hospital's charge for the mammogram is separate from the radiologist's fee to read the mammogram. The radiologist will bill you separately.

If you decide to schedule a 3-D mammogram...

Please let the Imaging Department know when you schedule your appointment, and they will be happy to provide this service. Tomosynthesis is going to be the gold standard in breast imaging, and we are proud to bring it here for you. If you have any questions about tomosynthesis, don't hesitate to call the HRRMC Imaging Department at 719-530-2202.