

## What are breast calcifications?

As women get older, they sometimes get tiny bits of calcium in their breast called calcifications. They are too small to feel, but can show up on a mammogram as small, bright white spots. Most of the time, they are harmless. But when they show up in certain patterns, they may be a cause for concern and need more testing. For instance, tight clusters or lines of tiny calcifications can be a sign of breast cancer.

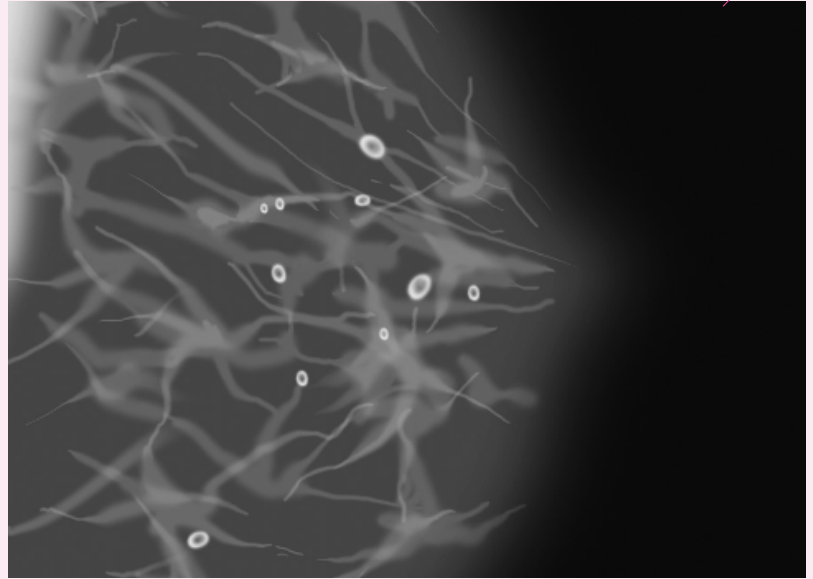
Calcifications are common in women, most often after age 50. They may be due to older age, past injury or an infection in the breast. They are not due to the amount of calcium in a woman's diet.

For women treated for breast cancer in the past, calcifications may also be due to past breast surgery or radiation therapy.

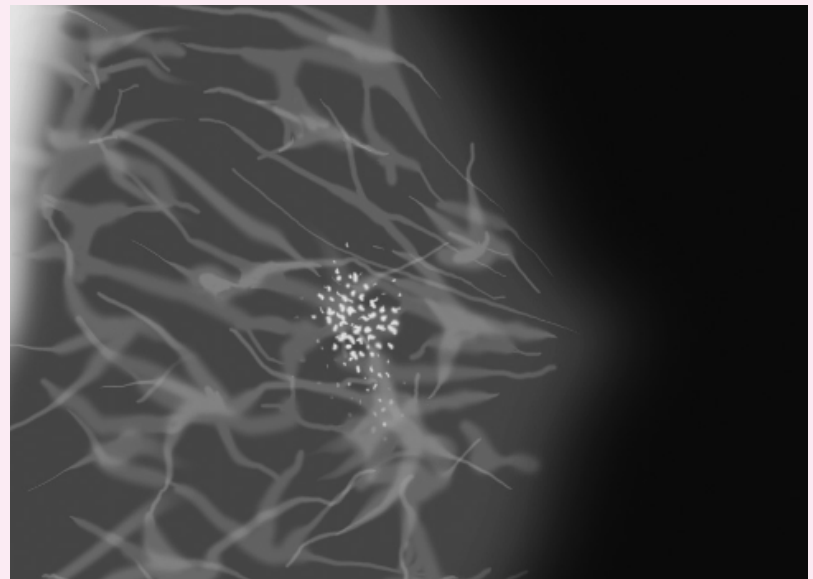
## Types of calcifications

There are 2 main types of calcifications: macro (see photo A) and micro (see photo B).

- Macrocalcifications look large and round on a mammogram. They are not usually related to cancer.
- Microcalcifications are small and may appear in clusters. They are usually benign (not cancer). But, can be a sign of breast cancer. Your doctor will note if they have changed over time. Follow-up tests may be needed to rule out breast cancer.



**Photo A:** Macrocalcifications are large and randomly spread throughout the breast. No follow-up care is needed.



**Photo B:** Microcalcifications are small, appear clustered. These may be a sign of breast cancer. A follow-up mammogram or a biopsy may be needed.

For more information, visit [komen.org](http://komen.org) or call Susan G. Komen's breast care helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 10 PM ET.

## Resources

### Susan G. Komen®

1-877 GO KOMEN  
(1-877-465-6636)  
[komen.org](http://komen.org)

### Questions to Ask the Doctor

[komen.org/questions](http://komen.org/questions)

### American Cancer Society

1-800-ACS-2345  
[cancer.org](http://cancer.org)

### National Cancer Institute 1-800-4-CANCER

[cancer.gov](http://cancer.gov)

## Related fact sheets in this series

- Biopsy
- Breast Cancer Screening and Follow-up Tests
- Ductal Carcinoma in Situ



## Suspicious microcalcifications

Sometimes it's hard to tell if microcalcifications are benign or a sign of breast cancer. More images may be needed. They will help decide if the microcalcifications are benign or suspicious for cancer. If they look suspicious, more follow-up tests are needed. This follow-up may include a biopsy to confirm or rule out breast cancer.

## Questions to ask your doctor

- How does my mammogram look compared to my last one?
- Do you see any changes? If so, what are those changes?
- If I need to come back, what kinds of follow-up tests will I need?
- If I need a biopsy, what are the pros and cons?

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