

What is breast density?

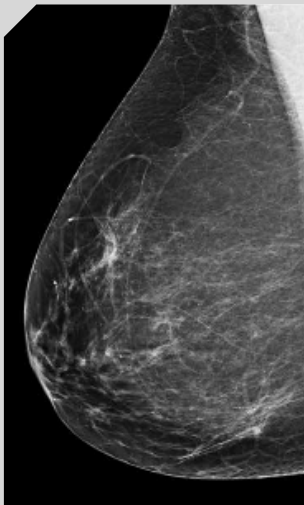
Breast density describes how the breasts look on a mammogram. It's not a measure of how the breasts feel. The radiologist may note your breast density on your mammography report.

Breasts are made up of breast tissue (milk ducts and lobules) and fat. Connective tissue helps hold everything in place. Breast density compares the area of breast and connective tissue to the area of fat. Breast and connective tissue are denser than fat and this difference shows on a mammogram.

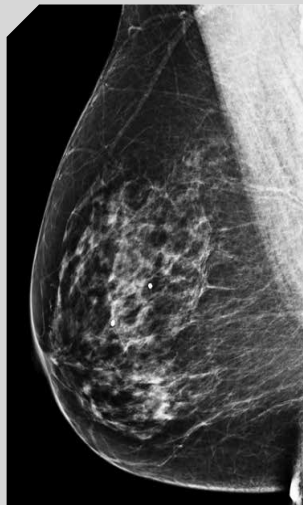
- High breast density means there's more breast and connective tissue compared to fat.
- Low breast density means there's more fat compared to breast and connective tissue.

Young women often have dense breasts. After menopause, women's breasts become less dense. For women who use menopausal hormones, breast density may not decrease until they stop using hormones.

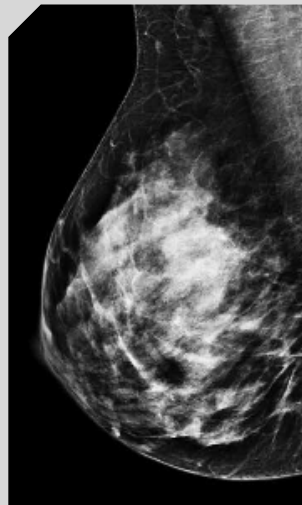
These mammogram images show a range of breast density. Some breasts are mostly fat (fatty breast) and some breasts are mostly breast and connective tissue (dense breast).



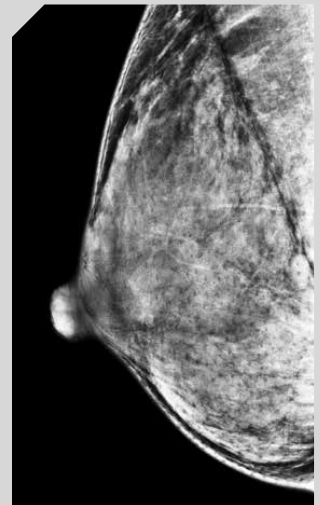
Fatty breast



Some breast density



More breast density



Dense breast

Images used with permission from the American College of Radiology (www.acr.org).

Screening in women with dense breasts

Breast cancer can be hard to find on a mammogram in a woman with dense breasts. This is because dense breast tissue can look white or light gray on a mammogram. Cancer also looks white or light gray so it can be hard to tell the difference.

There are no special screening recommendations for women with dense breasts today.

This fact sheet is intended to be a brief overview. For more information, visit komen.org or call Susan G. Komen's Breast Care Helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET, or email at helpline@komen.org. Se habla español.

Related online resources:

- [Breast Cancer Risk Factors](#)
- [Breast Cancer Screening and Follow-up Tests](#)
- [Breast Density - poster](#)
- [Questions to Ask Your Doctor About Breast Density](#)



Breast density and breast cancer risk

Women with high breast density have an increased risk of breast cancer. However, we don't know why breast density increases risk. It's also not clear if lowering breast density would decrease risk. For example, getting older and gaining weight after menopause are both related to a decrease in breast density. However, both are also related to an increase in breast cancer risk. More study is needed in this area.

Talking with a doctor

Ask your doctor if your mammogram shows you have dense breasts. If so, talk about whether other types of [breast imaging](#), in addition to regular [mammograms](#), might be right for you.

Breast density legislation

Many states in the U.S. require doctors to notify women if they have dense breasts found on a mammogram.

In March 2023, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) updated their regulations to require all mammography centers in the U.S. to notify women about their breast density after getting a mammogram.

Although this may seem helpful, there are no special screening guidelines for women with dense breasts today. It is helpful to have information about your breast density. It can lead to discussions with your doctor about your overall [breast cancer risk](#).

If you have concerns about your breast density or your risk of breast cancer, talk with your doctor.

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