

## What are breast calcifications?

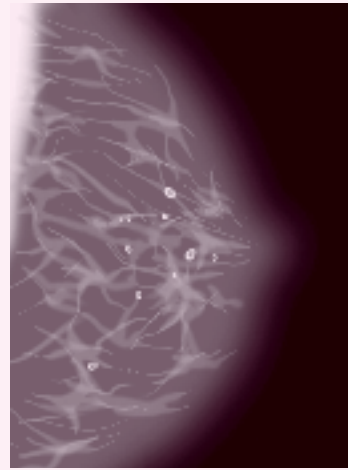
Breast calcifications are tiny calcium deposits that sometimes form in the breast as a woman ages. They are common and found on about half of all mammograms. Calcifications can result from a number of different things such as inflammation and trauma to the breast. There is no known relationship between the amount of calcium in a woman's diet and breast calcifications.

Calcifications are too small to be felt. They can be seen on a mammogram where they appear as little white spots. Most of the time calcifications are a harmless finding. They are not cancer themselves. However, sometimes the area around the calcification can be breast cancer, so they must be looked at carefully.

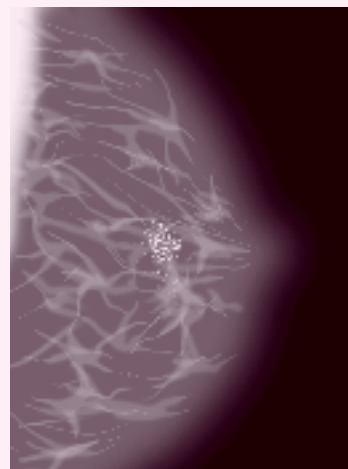
## Types of calcifications

There are two main types of calcifications, macro and micro.

- Macrocalcifications are almost always associated with benign conditions (not cancer). They appear large and round on a mammogram and require no further follow-up.
- Microcalcifications are smaller and more numerous than the larger macrocalcifications. They are usually benign, but can be a warning sign of cancer. The radiologist looks at the size, shape and pattern of the microcalcifications to see if they are "suspicious." More mammograms and a biopsy may be necessary.



*Benign macrocalcifications are larger and randomly spread throughout the breast. No follow-up care is usually needed.*



*Microcalcifications are small, appear clustered and have irregular shapes. These may be a sign of cancer. Follow-up with more mammograms and a biopsy may be needed.*

## Suspicious microcalcifications

Sometimes it is hard to tell if microcalcifications are suspicious for breast cancer. When this happens the radiologist may take more X-rays to help decide if the microcalcifications are benign, probably benign, suspicious or malignant. If they are described as “probably benign,” it is very likely that the area is not cancer. However, if they are “suspicious,” more follow-up is needed.

## Questions to ask your radiologist

- Has my mammogram changed since my last one?
- What changes do you see?
- What do those changes mean?
- If you suggest I come back for a follow-up mammogram, what are the benefits and risks of waiting?
- If you suggest I have a biopsy, what are the benefits and risks of having it now?



## Resources

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1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)  
[www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)  
*Questions to Ask Your Doctor*  
[www.komen.org/questions](http://www.komen.org/questions)

American Cancer Society  
1-800-ACS-2345  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

National Cancer Institute  
1-800-4-CANCER  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

### Related fact sheets in this series:

- Biopsy
- Ductal Carcinoma In Situ
- Mammography
- What is Breast Cancer?

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