

## What is breast density?

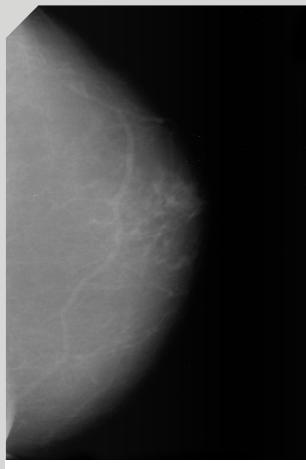
Breast density describes how the breasts look on a mammogram. It's not a measure of how the breasts feel. Your radiologist may note your breast density on your mammography report.

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.

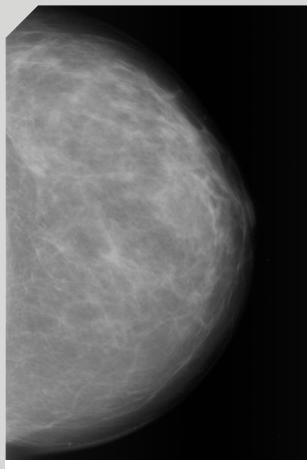
- High breast density means there's more tissue compared to fat.
- Low breast density means there's more fat compared to tissue.

Young women often have dense breasts. After menopause, women's breasts become less dense and more fatty. Women who use menopausal hormones tend to have denser breasts until they stop using hormones.

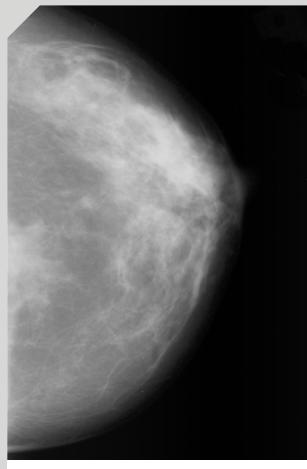
These mammogram images show a range of breast density. Some breasts are mostly fat (fatty breast) and some breasts are mostly breast and connective tissue (dense breast).



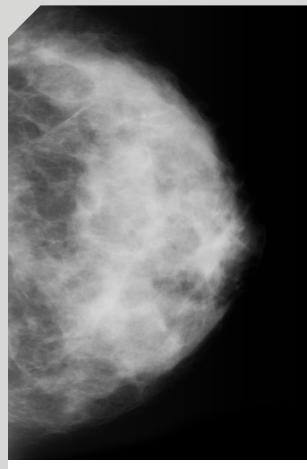
Fatty  
breast



Some  
breast  
density



More  
breast  
density



Dense  
breast

## Screening in women with dense breasts

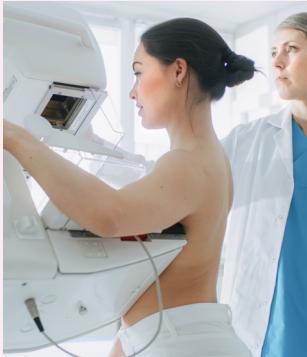
Breast cancer can be hard to find on a mammogram in a woman with dense breasts. This is because dense breast tissue can look white or light gray on a mammogram. Cancer also looks white or light gray so it can be hard to tell the difference.

There are no special screening recommendations for women with dense breasts. However, your doctor may suggest other types of breast imaging. If you have concerns talk with your doctor.

Breast ultrasound, breast MRI and 3D mammography (each in combination with 2D digital mammography) are being studied to learn whether they improve detection in women with dense breasts (compared to 2D digital mammography alone).

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.

# BREAST DENSITY



## Related educational resources:

- Breast Cancer Screening and Follow-up Tests
- Breast Cancer & Risk
- Questions to Ask Your Doctor About Breast Density
- Research Fast Facts – Breast Density
- Breast Density – poster

## 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 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 imaging tests might be right for you.



## Breast density legislation

Many states in the U.S. require health care providers to notify women if they have dense breasts found on a mammogram. Today there are no special screening guidelines for women with dense breasts. However, this information can lead to discussions with your doctor about overall risk.

If you have concerns about your breast density, talk with your doctor.

For more information go to [komen.org/breastdensity](http://komen.org/breastdensity).

## Komen's statement on breast density legislation

Susan G. Komen® endorses federal legislation requiring mammography centers to report breast density information to health care providers and patients.

Komen believes this legislation will improve the written mammography results providers send to patients. It requires the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to consult with leading cancer organizations (including Komen) in the development of standard wording for these patient reports.

The legislation also directs the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to focus research on improving breast cancer screening methods.

This content provided by Susan G. Komen® is designed for educational purposes only and is not exhaustive. Please consult with your personal physician.