

What is 3D mammography?

3D mammography is a revolutionary new screening and diagnostic tool designed for early breast cancer detection. We believe this is the most exciting breast screening breakthrough in nearly 20 years.

3D mammography is performed in conjunction with a traditional 2D digital mammogram to create a more complete picture of breast health. During the 3D part of the exam, the X-ray arm sweeps in a slight arc over the breast, taking multiple images. A computer then produces a layered 3D image of the breast tissue and the radiologist can scan through the 1mm images like pages in a book. Said another way, 3D mammography provides greater detail and allows the radiologist to see “inside” the breast layer by layer to find cancers earlier than ever.

There are many recognized names for 3D mammography such as breast tomosynthesis, digital breast tomosynthesis (DBT), 3D breast tomosynthesis, 3D tomosynthesis, tomosynthesis and tomo.

What are the benefits of 3D mammography

- Greater accuracy for earlier and easier detection. With conventional mammography the radiologist views the breast tissue in a flat image. Sometimes breast tissue appears overlapped, making it difficult to see all the individual structures and making normal breast tissue look abnormal. 3D mammography virtually eliminates these challenges and allows the radiologist to better see the different structures as well as the location, size and shape of any abnormal tissue, such as smaller, more invasive cancers. 3D mammography has been shown to improve breast cancer detection by 27-50%.
- Fewer call backs. In the past, if the radiologist saw an area that was questionable, the patient would be asked to return for additional imaging. Now, when the breast tissue can be seen in smaller, thinner sections, the “second look” is frequently unnecessary. 3D mammography has been shown to lower recall rates by 17-40%.

Are there any risks with 3D mammography?

3D mammography is approved for use by the FDA and very low X-ray energy is used during the exam. While there is more radiation than with 2D mammography, the amount used for a 3D exam is less than the recommended guidelines of the American College of Radiology (ACR) for 2D mammography alone.

What is the experience like?

How much longer will it take than a standard screening mammogram? The experience is nearly identical to a typical 2D digital mammogram, with the same position and compression required. For each of the four mammographic views, it takes just four more seconds for the device to sweep above the breast in a slight arc and take the additional 15 low-dose pictures. These pictures are then reconstructed into a series of high-resolution slices/layers which can be displayed individually or together in a dynamic fashion.

Can I choose not to have this exam?

Yes. 3D mammography is an optional addition to our traditional 2D digital mammography exam.

Can I add on the 3D imaging following my traditional 2D exam appointment?

No. The 3D images must be acquired at the same time as the 2D images. They are taken immediately prior to the 2D image. This is not a service that we can add onto your 2D examination at a later date.

Can I have the 3D only?

Not at this time. There are still findings that are best visualized on a 2D image (e.g., calcifications) while 3D mammography is best at finding invasive cancers. Therefore, 2D in conjunction with 3D mammography creates a much more complete picture of overall breast health. It is also well known that comparison of current images with prior images is standard mammography practice and critical to perceive subtle changes which may be associated with cancer. Therefore, it is best to have a direct comparison of current 2D images with prior 2D images. Soon we should be able to reconstruct a 2D image from the 3D information.

Is there an additional cost for 3D mammography and will my insurance cover it?

The 3D portion of your screening mammogram is currently covered by most major insurance carriers, including Medicare and NC Medicaid.

We strongly recommend that you verify coverage with your carrier before your appointment. Wake Radiology offers payment plans for all exams, including 3D mammograms. Our breast imaging radiologists believe so strongly in this advanced technology we don't want costs to keep you from having this potentially lifesaving screening.

What if I don't have insurance?

Patients without insurance who want 3D mammography are charged for the regular 2D mammogram plus the additional fee for the 3D mammogram. We are happy to extend payments over time (without interest or additional fees) to assist you.

Am I a candidate for 3D mammography?

Wake Radiology physicians believe all patients will benefit from this revolutionary technology regardless of breast density or family history of breast cancer. Doctors and scientists agree that early detection is the best defense against breast cancer. Clinical studies have shown that 3D mammography is more accurate than conventional mammography alone by detecting cancers earlier as well as reducing recall rates.

Can I have a 3D mammogram if I have breast implants?

Yes, it's important for all women over 40 to have screening mammograms. 3D mammograms have a specific setting for breast implants. 3D images of the breast are taken of the tissue in front of the implant in addition to the regular images of the breast. [Read more about why women with breast implants should still have a mammogram.](#)

What if my doctor did not mention 3D mammography to me?

As a patient, having a 3D mammogram is your choice. Most area providers are extremely supportive of this revolutionary technology since it provides greater clarity and improved detection for breast cancer. You can request a 3D mammogram on your own or choose to discuss the benefits of 3D mammography with your doctor before scheduling your next exam.

Why is Wake Radiology offering 3D mammography?

Wake Radiology prides itself on offering the highest quality care to our patients. We are bringing 3D mammography to the Triangle because our radiologists strongly believe that 3D mammography will benefit all our patients.

Recent clinical studies show very impressive results for 3D mammography in conjunction with 2D mammography as opposed to 2D images alone. This is why we have invested in this new technology.

How do I choose 3D mammography for my appointment?

It's easy. Just let our scheduling team know that you'd like to have a 3D mammogram when you [request an appointment online](#) or by phone at 919-232-4700. You may also request a 3D mammogram when you check-in for your appointment.

Where can I schedule my 3D screening mammogram?

Wake Radiology offers 3D mammography at [multiple locations throughout the greater Triangle area](#).

Our schedulers can help you find a location closest to you, simply call 919-232-4700 them today!

If you've had a mammogram at another location or provider, we will request your prior exams for comparison.

What if I need to return for additional imaging after my 3D screening mammogram?

If you have a 3D mammogram and are called back for additional breast imaging, you will need to return to Wake Radiology for those exams. It may be necessary to travel to an alternate office for additional imaging, our friendly schedulers will help you find the mammography imaging office closest to you that offers these required services.