



Abramson Cancer Center of the University of Pennsylvania

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is a safe, low-dose X-ray procedure that produces pictures of the inside of the breasts. Mammography can detect some suspicious breast changes that are too small or too deep to be felt on breast examination.

What is breast ultrasound?

A breast ultrasound is a test that uses sound waves to take pictures of the inside of your breasts. A breast ultrasound can determine if a breast lump is a hollow, fluid filled cyst or a solid mass.

When is a breast ultrasound performed?

A breast ultrasound may be done to evaluate abnormal areas seen on a mammogram. It may also be done to evaluate a breast lump or other breast changes that are not seen on a mammogram.

What is a mastectomy?

A mastectomy is the surgical removal of breast tissue. It is done to remove all evidence of breast cancer. Since a mastectomy will not remove any microscopic (too small to be seen) cancer cells that may be beyond the removed area, additional treatments, chemotherapy and hormonal therapy, may also be recommended.

When is a mastectomy recommended for the treatment of breast cancer?

In general, a mastectomy is recommended if:

- The breast tumor is more than 4-5cm in size.
- There are multiple tumors in the breast that can not be removed from one incision.
- There is a history of radiation therapy to the breast or chest wall.
- There is a history of connective tissue diseases.
- The breasts are small and/or the tumor is large such that the breast would be badly disfigured following the lumpectomy.
- The patient chooses not to have radiation therapy, which is necessary with lumpectomy.
- The patient prefers a mastectomy for personal reasons.

Are there different types of mastectomies?

There are a few different types of mastectomies. Your doctor and nurse will explain which mastectomy is being recommended for you and why.

- A **simple mastectomy** involves removal of the entire breast, skin and nipple.
- A **modified radical mastectomy** involves removal of the entire breast, skin, lining over the chest muscles and the nipple. Some axillary (underarm) lymph nodes are also removed. This is called an axillary lymph node dissection. This procedure helps to determine if the breast cancer has spread beyond the breast area to the lymph nodes. The Helpful Facts sheet, About Axillary Lymph Node Dissection, will give you more information about this procedure.
- A **skin-sparing mastectomy** involves the removal of the entire breast tissue and nipple. The breast skin is left. This surgery is usually done at the same time as breast reconstruction. Much of the breast's natural shape and feeling is retained. An axillary lymph node dissection may also be performed.
- A **radical mastectomy** involves removal of the entire breast, surrounding lymph nodes, chest wall muscles and fatty tissue.

What is Breast Reconstruction?

Breast reconstruction is achieved through several plastic surgery techniques that attempt to restore a breast to near normal shape, appearance and size following mastectomy.

http://plasticsurgery.org/Patients_and_Consumers/Procedures/Reconstructive_Procedures/Breast_Reconstruction.html

www.onocolink.org

What is chemotherapy?

- Chemotherapy is the use of drugs to kill cancer cells.
- Depending upon the kind of cancer and its stage of development, chemotherapy can be used to:
 - Cure cancer
 - Prevent the spread of cancer to other parts of the body
 - Kill cancer cells that have spread to other parts of the body
 - Decrease the size of a cancerous tumor
 - Relieve symptoms caused by the cancer.

How does chemotherapy work?

- Chemotherapy drugs attack cancer cells and slow or stop the cell's ability to grow and multiply.
- Cancer cells go through many steps to grow. There are many types of chemotherapy drugs and each interferes with cell growth at a different step. Certain chemotherapy drugs are given only for certain diseases.

How does radiation therapy work?

Radiation, when used at energies that are a thousand times the energies used to produce a chest X-ray, can kill cells. Both normal and cancer cells are affected, but radiation treatment is intended and designed to maximize tumor effect and minimize normal tissue effect. Maximizing tumor effect is one reason that radiation treatments are given as a series of many small doses, rather than a few large doses.