

08. What happens during a mammogram?

Mammography is a simple procedure. A registered technologist takes an x-ray of each breast with a machine that is used only for breast x-rays. It is different from x-ray machines that are used to take x-rays of the bones or other parts of the body. The standard mammogram exam includes two views of each breast, one from above and one angled from the side. The technologist places the breast between two flat plastic plates. The two plates are then pressed together. The idea is to flatten the breast as much as possible. Spreading the tissue out makes any abnormal details easier to spot with a minimum of radiation. The technologist takes the x-ray, and then repeats the procedure for the next view. The pressure from the plates may be uncomfortable, or even slightly painful, but each x-ray takes less than one minute.