Breast Ultrasound

Early Detection is the Key

Your doctor has advised you to have a breast ultrasound because an abnormal appearing area was seen on your mammogram. It is reassuring to know that the majority of abnormalities are benign (non-cancerous). Numerous studies have shown that early detection greatly improves the chances for successful treatment of breast cancer and provides more treatment options.

This center uses the most advanced technology available to aid in the detection and diagnosis of breast cancer. The Aixplorer® MultiWave™ Ultrasound System uses the latest breast ultrasound technology and has been designed to produce superior clinical images while making the procedure quick and comfortable as possible for you.

For additional information on breast health, call the American Cancer Society at 1.800.ACS.2345 or visit www.hologic.com.
What is breast ultrasound?
Breast ultrasound is a painless, non-invasive, non-radiation imaging exam that helps physicians evaluate abnormalities detected by mammography or during a clinical breast exam. Breast ultrasound uses high-frequency sound waves to provide immediate imaging of the breast. Many studies have shown that ultrasound can help supplement mammography by detecting abnormalities that may not be visible with mammography.

Why do I need an ultrasound?
If your physician requested that you have an ultrasound, it means the radiologist needs more information. The physician will perform an ultrasound to acquire images of the area of concern.

Don’t worry – the fact that you require additional imaging does not mean you have cancer. A majority of abnormalities found during a mammogram are not breast cancer. With ultrasound, physicians often discover that the area of concern is actually benign (non-cancerous), such as cysts (collections of fluid in the breast) or benign tumors known as fibroadenomas.

How does an ultrasound work?
A transducer (a handheld device that resembles a microphone) is used to transmit high-frequency sound waves through the breast. When the transducer is pressed against the skin, it emits small pulses of sound waves into the body. As the sound waves make contact with the structures inside your breast, like tissues and fluids, they create echoes. The echoes are analyzed by a computer and then translated into a real-time image that is displayed on a computer monitor.

What can I expect during the exam?
You will be asked to undress from the waist up and wear a gown. During the procedure, you will lay on your back with your arm raised above your head. A water-based gel is applied to the area being examined to ensure sufficient contact between the transducer and your skin. The ultrasound technologist (sonographer) or radiologist will press the transducer firmly against the skin in various locations to obtain images of the abnormality. Because the images are in real-time, the technologist or radiologist may be able to review your images as they are acquired. The ultrasound exam typically lasts 20-30 minutes.

How is ultrasound different from mammography?
Mammography is often used as the first imaging modality in breast screening and it is currently the only FDA approved screening tool for breast cancer. The goal of mammography is to detect abnormalities. Ultrasound is FDA approved for diagnostic imaging and can be used in addition to mammography to help detect and classify an area of concern that cannot be adequately assessed through mammography alone.

Unlike a mammogram, there is no need to compress your breast to obtain an ultrasound image. While you may feel a slight pressure from the transducer, patients usually report feeling no discomfort during the procedure.

What is the physician looking for?
The goal of breast ultrasound imaging is to determine if the abnormality is most likely benign or suspicious enough to require further examination. There are two main types of abnormalities, calcifications and masses. Calcifications are tiny mineral deposits in the breast tissue that appear as small white regions on the mammogram. A mass is any group of cells clustered together more densely than the surrounding tissue. While ultrasound typically cannot detect calcifications, it can help identify some breast masses and is the best way to determine if the suspicious area is a cyst without requiring the use of a needle.

Early detection is your best defense against breast cancer.

For more information, please contact our office.