

DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING

Fact Sheet | 2019

Traditional screening mammography is an x-ray examination of the breast of an asymptomatic woman. Once signs or symptoms of breast disease have been found, diagnostic imaging (diagnostic mammography, ultrasound, breast MRI, etc) is recommended. In addition, diagnostic imaging may be recommended for women who have a prior history of breast cancer.

Diagnostic Imaging

- Diagnostic mammograms are performed in the same way and with the same equipment as traditional screening mammograms, usually requiring additional views and under the immediate supervision of the interpreting physician.
- Breast ultrasound uses sound waves to make images of the breast and is often used as a follow-up test after an abnormal finding on a mammogram or clinical breast exam.
- Breast MRI is another follow-up test used to detect breast cancer and other abnormalities. A breast MRI uses a contrast agent to aid in capturing images of the breast. The images are combined to generate a detailed picture of the breast.
- Required follow-up diagnostic services due to an abnormal mammogram are pivotal in the process of detecting breast cancers early. An estimated 10 percent of screening mammograms required a follow-up diagnostic mammogram.
- From an early detection perspective, a screening mammogram would not be considered successful if follow-up diagnostic imaging were not performed to identify the abnormality or possible cancer. The systematic use of breast cancer screening and follow-up diagnostics has led to significant increases in the early detection of breast cancer over the past 20 years.
- Due to the elimination of cost-sharing, patient adherence and use of screening mammography is expected to increase. The increase in breast cancer screening will result in an increased need of follow-up diagnostic imaging.

Fair and Equal Coverage of Mammography

- Patients may be required to pay higher co-pays, co-insurance and other cost sharing mechanisms when obtaining diagnostic imaging services.
- If women are unable to afford the out-of-pockets costs, many might delay or forego follow-up screenings, leading to later diagnoses. This delay can mean that women will not seek care until the cancer has spread beyond the breast making it much deadlier and much more costly to treat.
- Reducing out-of-pocket costs for diagnostic imaging would improve access and allow for more timely diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer.
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The Susan G. Komen Greater Iowa urges the Iowa Legislature to eliminate the disparity in health insurance coverage between screening and diagnostic mammography by supporting diagnostic imaging legislation.

