

3 key steps to help detect breast cancer early

Novant Health Employer Solutions

Breast cancer cannot be prevented, but early detection provides the greatest possibility of successful treatment. Early detection means finding the cancer before it spreads. By following these three steps, you will help increase your chance of detecting breast cancer early.

1. Breast self-awareness

Breast self-awareness can help you become familiar with how your breasts normally look and feel. Knowing this will help you identify any changes in your breasts that should be reported to your healthcare team promptly. If you find a lump, schedule an appointment with your doctor, but don't panic – most lumps are not cancer.

What changes to look for

- A lump or thickening in or near the breast or in the underarm area
- A change in the size or shape of the breast
- Dimpling or puckering in the skin of the breast
- A nipple turned inward into the breast
- Discharge (fluid) from the nipple
- Scaly, red or swollen skin on the breast, nipple or areola (the dark area of skin at the center of the breast)

You should see your healthcare provider about any of these symptoms. Often these symptoms are not due to cancer, but if you notice any changes in your body,

tell your doctor or advanced practice provider immediately so that the problems can be diagnosed and treated.

2. Well-woman exam

It is recommended that women visit their family physician or gynecologist each year for a well-woman exam. In addition to a routine pelvic exam and Pap test, the doctor may perform a brief breast exam to check for abnormalities.

The well-woman exam is a great opportunity for you to ask your healthcare provider any questions or discuss any concerns you have regarding your breast health. For example, your doctor may help you to determine the most appropriate personalized frequency for your early detection steps.

3. Get your annual mammogram

In its early stages, breast cancer doesn't usually cause symptoms, and a mammogram can often catch cancer early. The recommendation is that women ages 40 and older get a mammogram every year. It is a safe way to detect cancerous tumors and other abnormal breast conditions. In fact, women who have screening mammograms have a lower chance of dying from breast cancer than women who do not have this exam. Mammograms can detect cancer or other problems before a lump becomes large enough to be detected by touch.

Find a location and schedule a mammogram at
[NovantHealth.org/Pink](https://www.novanthealth.org/Pink)

