When Should Screening Mammograms Begin?

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**Abstract**

Screening mammograms are imaging exams performed yearly to evaluate breast tissue. As women age, changes in breast tissue can be normal or can be an early sign of cancer. The age women should begin screening mammograms is not clear. According to literature it has created much controversy over the years. Most women begin the screening process at the age of 40, and even earlier depending on family history. Research groups from multiple institutions followed and evaluated women who received yearly mammograms. Most women were divided into groups based on age to see if recalls, breast cancer, or biopsies were more common in specific age groups. Some would say that the amount of recalls and biopsies that happen are excessive, and are being too cautious. Results showed that women of younger ages tend to get called back more for benign findings rather than women who are older. This research demonstrates that if cancer can be detected at an earlier age, the outcome for the patient is better. Being a little more cautious is better than overlooking something that could potentially become worse. The age at which screening mammograms should begin may change in the future as technology advances and research is ongoing.

 *Keywords:* screening mammogram, recall, benign, cancer, biopsy, age, controversy, family history, early