

How to Ask for More Breast Testing

Print/download this helpful resource to bring to your appointments.



If your healthcare professional says:



You can say:

“The ‘new’ 3D mammogram works better in dense breasts, so you don’t need any other additional testing (like ultrasound or breast MRI).”



Additional tests find cancers that are hidden on a mammogram (whether 2D or 3D). While 3D finds a small number of additional cancers over a 2D, tests like breast MRI, find much more. I would like additional testing. [Note: If you are not able to have breast MRI, additional cancers are also found on contrast-enhanced mammography or molecular breast imaging or even ultrasound.]

“The additional tests may find things that mean you have to come back for more testing – but that turn out to be a false alarm (known as a ‘false positive’). These tests may create unnecessary anxiety for you.”



I am willing to accept the short-term anxiety of a false alarm. I am more concerned about having a cancer growing in my dense breast tissue that is hidden on my mammogram. I would like additional testing.

“Screening guidelines do not recommend additional testing (ultrasound or breast MRI) for women with dense breasts.”



(If extremely dense): Guidelines actually do recommend additional testing with breast MRI for women with extremely dense breasts. I would like additional testing.

(If heterogeneously dense, USA patients): Dense breasts both increase the risk of breast cancer and can hide cancer on a mammogram, and **guidelines indicate I should “consider” breast MRI.** I would like additional testing. [Note: If you do have additional risk factors such as a personal history of breast cancer or atypical biopsy, or family history of breast cancer, guidelines do recommend breast MRI.]

“You don’t have a strong family history or any other risk factors. You don’t need to worry about additional testing.”



Dense breasts are a **more common breast cancer risk factor than family history.** And they can also hide cancer. At least 75% of women diagnosed with breast cancer have no known risk factors. I would like additional testing.

For USA patients: “I do not think your insurance will cover additional testing.”



There are new federal guidelines for insurance coverage for women with dense breasts. Can your office **please double check with my insurer** or give me the appropriate billing codes so that I can? [Note: Some plans are exempt from providing this additional coverage like Original Medicare (Part B), VHA and TRICARE.]