What is DenseBreast-info.org?

DenseBreast-info.org is the world's leading educational website about dense breasts. Patients and health care professionals can find accurate, up-to-date and medically-sourced information developed by breast imaging experts and researchers.

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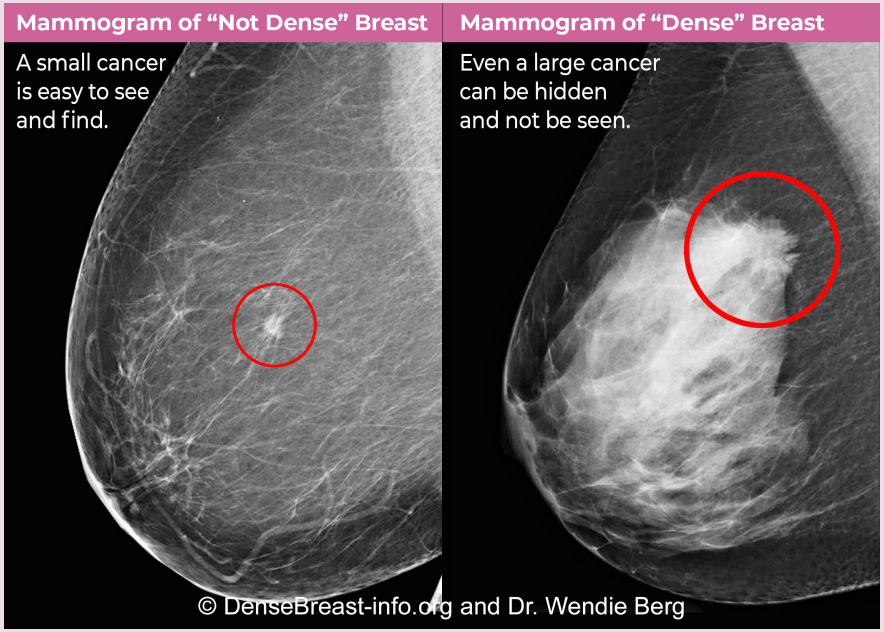
GET SMART ABOUT BEING DENSE™

Notes & Appointment Information

THERE ARE FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW.

Dense breasts have nothing to do with the way a breast looks or feels. Dense breast tissue **makes cancer harder to see** on a mammogram and **increases the risk** of developing breast cancer.



THIS MATERIAL IS NOT INTENDED AS MEDICAL ADVICE. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, PLEASE CONTACT A QUALIFIED MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

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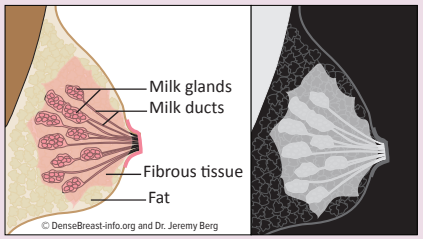
5 FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

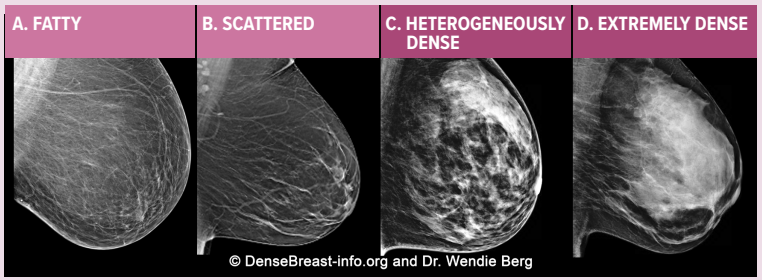
1 Breasts are made of **fat and glands that make milk,** held together by fibrous tissue. The more glands and fibrous tissue compared to fatty tissue that a woman has, the "denser" her breast tissue.



Dense tissue, in pink. *How dense tissue shows on a mammogram.*

2 **Many women have dense breasts.** This is normal and common. In fact, nearly half (over 40%) of women over age 40 have dense breasts.

3 When radiologists look at mammograms, **they can see how dense the breasts are.** In these four mammogram images, the dense tissue appears as white. Categories A and B are "not dense" breasts. Categories C and D are "dense" breasts.



4 Dense tissue appears white on a mammogram, and so does cancer. This makes it **harder for radiologists to see cancer in dense breasts.** Because cancer can be missed, it is often found when larger and at a later stage in women with dense breasts.

5 **Dense breasts are also a risk factor for breast cancer.** A woman's risk for breast cancer increases with the level of density in her breasts.

I HAVE DENSE BREASTS...NOW WHAT?

- **Ask for a 3D mammogram** (digital breast tomosynthesis) if available (instead of a digital 2D mammogram).
- **Ask about additional screening tests** that can find cancer that may be hidden on a mammogram.
- The type of additional screening tests recommended will depend on your breast density and other risk factors. **Talk with your health professional** to learn your risk level and what tests may be right for you.
- If your lifetime risk of breast cancer is 20% or greater, you are "high risk." You can do a risk assessment using free tools like: https://magview.com/ibis-risk-calculator/.

IMPORTANT BREAST CANCER RISK FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- Dense breasts
- Disease-causing genetic variant (like *BRCA*)
- Prior breast biopsies with "atypical" results, lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS), or breast cancer
- Family history of cancer, especially breast or ovarian cancer
- Prior chest radiation therapy before age 30
- High body mass index (BMI) after menopause
- Alcohol consumption (the more consumed, the greater the risk)

SHOULD I GET MORE SCREENING TESTS AFTER MY MAMMOGRAM?

If you are at high risk, with or without dense breasts, have a yearly breast MRI* in addition to your mammogram.

If you have extremely dense breasts, have a yearly breast MRI in addition to your mammogram.

If you have heterogeneously dense breasts and are not otherwise at high risk, consider additional screening with breast MRI*.

If you have had breast cancer, have a yearly mammogram and breast MRI* especially if you still have dense breasts or were diagnosed before age 50.

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*If you are not able to have a breast MRI, a contrast-enhanced mammogram (CEM) or molecular breast imaging (MBI) may be other options. Ultrasound can be considered if these options are not possible. Breast MRI is not recommended beyond age 74 and decision to have breast MRI between age 70-74 should be based on individual health and preferences.

Europeans: The European Society of Breast Imaging recommends that women with extremely dense breasts aged 50 to 70 years be offered breast MRI every 2 to 4 years. If breast MRI is unavailable, ultrasound with mammography may be used.