

Digital mammograms makes viewing easier for docs

By Jeffery Behar

It's time for your annual mammogram, and you've just learned that you're going to have a digital one.

If you've never had a digital mammogram, you might be wondering, "What's the difference between it and a more traditional film mammogram?"



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Both use X-rays to capture images of the breasts. And yes, your breasts still have to be compressed for a digital mammogram – there's no escaping that part of the procedure. But Barton has the MammoPad which makes compression much more comfortable.

The difference between film and digital is how those images are recorded and stored. A traditional mammogram displays images on a large piece of film.

A radiologist studies the film for any suspicious looking areas in the breasts.

A digital mammogram, on the other hand, converts X-rays into electrical signals that are sent to a computer. The images that are produced can be enhanced, magnified or manipulated on a computer screen, which can help the radiologist see specific

areas of the breasts more clearly.

The images also can be stored electronically and transmitted from one location to another, allowing breast specialists in different locations to study them.

A digital mammogram also takes less time to perform, which in turn shortens the amount of discomfort time.

Is digital better?

The earlier breast cancer can be found, the better the chances that treatment will work. Both digital and film mammograms can often detect breast cancer at an early stage.

However digital mammography is better than film mammography at finding cancers in:

- Women with dense breasts. About 40 percent of women who undergo screening mammography have dense breasts.
- Women younger than 50, regardless of breast density.
- Women who had their final menstrual periods within 12 months of their mammograms.

When should I be screened?

Most experts agree: Regular screening with either digital or film mammography saves lives.

The American Cancer Society recommends that you get a mammogram once a year beginning at age 40 and every year after that as long as you're in good health.

If you're at high risk of breast cancer because of a family history of the disease or other factors, your doctor may recommend that you be tested more often and at an earlier age.

Stateline Mammography has merged with the Mammography Department at Barton Memorial Hospital. Digital mammograms

with the warmer, softer MammoPad are available at Barton Memorial Hospital. Call (530) 543.5851 for your appointment.

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