

# COMPRESSION

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The technologist doing your mammogram is specially trained to take breast x-rays. The x-ray machine used is specifically designed for a screening mammogram test. **Compression of the breast is necessary and does several things to ensure the best image possible:**

## 1. PREVENTS MOTION

Compression keeps your breast perfectly still during the test. This is very important because small movements, even a breath, may make the x-ray blurry. If the x-ray is blurry:

- it is impossible to see small details
- any abnormalities or changes in the tissue will be harder to find
- the x-ray will need to be repeated.

## 2. SPREADS OUT THE TISSUE

Compression spreads out the breast tissue so it is easier to see small changes in the breast. Think of your breast as a bag of marbles. When the bag is round like a ball you cannot see what is going on in the middle. When the bag is spread out, the pink marble in the middle becomes visible.



## 3. DECREASES RADIATION

Compression thins out the breast tissue. Therefore a lower x-ray dose can be used. Thicker breast tissue needs more radiation to make the x-ray image.

## WILL A MAMMOGRAM DAMAGE MY BREAST OR CAUSE CANCER?

Compression may cause some pain and discomfort during and after the mammogram. The pain and discomfort are temporary and do **not** cause cancer. The minimum amount of compression is used to get the best image possible.

## HOW DOES IT FEEL?

Every client's experience is different. Most clients find having a mammogram uncomfortable. A few find it painful. 64% of BreastCheck clients say the discomfort is the same or less than the discomfort of wearing shoes that are too tight.

If mammograms are painful, speak with the mammogram technologist who is trained to make the test as comfortable as possible. The compression is necessary, but very brief.

If you have a painful experience, remember, your breasts change over your lifetime. Age and hormone levels cause changes in the breast tissue which can affect discomfort level during a mammogram. Your next mammogram might not hurt as much.

To make the mammogram more comfortable, you can:

- ✓ take a mild pain reliever before your appointment, and/or
- ✓ make your appointment for when you feel rested and well.