Digital Mammograms and Screening Guidelines

Remember when you upgraded your film camera to a digital camera; what prompted you to make the change? The advanced technology, the crystal clear images and the ease of editing photographs are just some perks of going digital. The same is true with mammography technology. The development of digital mammography from film has brought an array of changes and benefits. While film mammography is still used, digital mammography has a superior detection rate for women with higher risks of breast cancer.

HOW DOES DIGITAL MAMMOGRAPHY WORK?
Both film and digital mammography use X-rays to capture breast tissue images. Radiologists then examine the X-rays for abnormalities and signs of cancer. The difference between digital and film mammography is in how the images are stored.

Film Mammography – X-ray images are stored on film, much in the same way a traditional film camera captures pictures.

Digital Mammography – X-ray images are stored as electronic signals and sent to a computer. This is similar to how a digital camera stores pictures. The result is a clearer digital image that can be enhanced and manipulated for better examination.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL MAMMOGRAMS?
Your testing experience will be the same whether you have a digital or a film mammogram. However, there are several benefits you and your doctor will experience from digital mammograms.

• **Easier Interpretation** – Mammograms can be very difficult to read. Because digital mammograms are stored electronically, they can be examined and analyzed by computers as well as radiologists.

• **Image manipulation** – Film mammogram pictures cannot be changed or enhanced. With digital images, doctors can enhance, zoom-in and increase the contrast between areas. This allows for ease of interpretation and diagnosis.
• **Lower average radiation dosage** – Studies have shown digital mammograms to emit about 25 percent less radiation than film mammograms because smaller sections of the breast are imaged in each view.

• **Easier second opinions** – Other doctors and health care professionals can share and access digital mammogram files with ease because they are stored on computers.

• **Easier to store** – Since digital mammogram results are stored on computers, it’s easier for doctors to pull up old tests and compare them with newer ones.

**WHO SHOULD GET A DIGITAL MAMMOGRAM?**

Researchers have found digital mammograms more effective for the following groups:

- Women under 50 years of age
- Women with dense breasts
- Women who have not gone through menopause yet, or who have been in menopause less than one year

**HOW OFTEN SHOULD I GET A MAMMOGRAM?**

Breast cancer is the leading type of cancer in women of all ages. If diagnosed early, the rate for survival and effective treatment is high. The best way to detect breast cancer is through mammography.

A baseline mammogram is recommended for women during the age range of 35 to 40. After that, doctors recommend that women over 40 get a mammogram once a year. Also, women 25 years and older with a family history of breast cancer should receive an annual mammogram and/or an MRI.

To schedule your digital mammography appointment, call the Longview Breast Center at (903) 315-2130 or the Marshall Breast Center at (903) 927-6227.