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## What is Breast Thermography? The Newest Line of Defense in Early Breast Cancer Detection Explained



Posted on Tuesday, August 24th, 2010 at 8:44 am.

Posted by [CHICKAGO](#)

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More women are diagnosed with breast cancer in America than any other cancer. Fortunately, treatment has come a long way, indicated by the 89% of women who had a five-year survival rate from 1999-2006 (National Cancer Institute). But early detection still plays a vital role in optimizing a breast cancer patient's chances for full recovery. Women today understand the importance of annual mammograms and monthly self examinations, but many women have not tried or even heard of another early detection exam available to them: breast

thermography.

Breast thermography, also known as Digital Infrared Thermal Imaging (DITI) is a simple, safe non-invasive test of the breast. Thermography can provide early detection of breast conditions beyond what is possible through monthly self-exam, doctor exam or mammogram. Thermography works by taking infrared images of the breast that detect minute temperature changes associated with breast inflammation and tumors. Having this information allows for the earliest possible intervention and treatment. It involves no radiation, discomfort or pain, and the entire thermography scan takes about 15 minutes.

What is the difference between a thermogram and mammogram?

Breast thermography plays a role in early detection and monitoring of abnormal physiology, including breast cancer, and is considered a screening device. Mammograms, on the other hand, are used to precisely locate an abnormal area and are considered a diagnostic tool. Breast thermography does not replace mammography. Rather, the two are considered complementary to each other.

Who can benefit from thermography?

All women can benefit from breast screening with thermography. It is especially appropriate for younger women (age 30-50) whose denser breast tissue makes it more difficult for mammograms to be effective. Thermography is also an ideal choice for women of any age who, for any number of reasons, are unable to undergo routine mammography. Thermography can provide a clinical marker to the doctor or mammographer, pinpointing a specific area of the breast that needs particularly close examination.

There are no conditions that make thermography inadvisable and it can be safely and effectively utilized by women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or have implants. It should be noted, however, that breasts are more highly vascularized, meaning they have more blood vessels during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Such vascularization can make baseline screening through thermography more difficult. Typically, thermography will only be used on a pregnant or breastfeeding woman suffering from a specific complaint such as a lump, discomfort or infection. Baseline routine screening should ideally be done 3 months after a woman has stopped breastfeeding.

What are the early breast cancer detection guidelines?

There is no single method for the early detection of breast cancer. Using a combination of methods will increase your chances of detecting cancer in an early stage. These methods include :

- Mammography for all women who are aged 40 or older.
- Regular breast thermography (DITI) screening for adult women of all ages.
- A regular breast examination by a health professional.
- Monthly breast self-examination.
- Personal awareness of changes in the breasts.
- Readiness to promptly discuss any such changes with a doctor.

These guidelines should be considered along with your background and medical history.

Can thermography detect breast cancer?

It takes years for a tumor to grow, thus the earliest possible indication of abnormality will allow for the earliest possible treatment and intervention. Thermography can play an important role in monitoring breast health and assisting in early detection.

Breast cancer tends to grow significantly faster in younger women:

AGE	AVERAGE TUMOR DOUBLING TIME
Under 50 years old	80 days
50 – 70 years old	157 days
Over 70 years old	188 days

(Source: Cancer 71:3547-3551, 1993)

The faster a malignant tumor grows, the more infrared radiation it generates. For younger women in particular, results from thermography screening can lead to earlier detection and, ultimately, longer life.

Doctors do not yet know how to prevent breast cancer. However, you can increase your chances of detecting breast cancer in its earliest stages by understanding the need for and participating in an early detection program.

About 20% of biopsied breast lumps are cancerous. If you find a lump, act quickly—when cancer is found early there are choices for

treatment, and with prompt treatment the outlook is good. In fact, most women treated for early breast cancer will be free from breast cancer for the rest of their lives. So be sure to maintain an early breast cancer detection regimen that includes annual mammograms and monthly self exams. And consider whether adding thermography to your regimen is the right choice for you.

Written by: Lauren Feder, M.D. specializes in homeopathy, pediatrics and primary care medicine. Known for her holistically minded approach and combining the ‘best of both worlds,’ Dr. Feder is a frequent lecturer for parents and professionals and is the author of Natural Baby and Childcare and The Parents’ Concise Guide to Childhood Vaccinations. [www.drfeder.com](http://www.drfeder.com).

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