

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *Public*

#### 1. What is changing within breast cancer screening in Ontario?

Based on the recommendation made by Cancer Care Ontario, all mammography with computed radiography technology will transition to digital direct radiography technology in order to maintain the province's commitment to continuous quality improvement to cancer screening in Ontario.

#### 2. Why a change to the type of technology used in Ontario?

Cancer Care Ontario, an advisor to government, made the recommendation based on new evidence, published in *Radiology* on May 14, 2013, to ensure women have access to the most effective mammography technology.

The independent study led by a Cancer Care Ontario (CCO) lead research scientist examining the technology used for mammography, has found that digital direct radiography (DR) and screen film are significantly more effective than digital computed radiography (CR) at detecting breast cancer.

#### 3. What is mammography? What is the difference between mammography using CR and DR technology?

Mammography is the primary test used to screen for breast cancer. Traditionally, women were screened with screen film mammography, in which an image was captured on, and viewed on a film. With advances in technology, digital mammography was developed, where images of the breast were no longer viewed on film, but were viewed and assessed on a computer screen.

There are two types of digital mammography systems referred to as digital direct radiography (DR) and computed radiography (CR).

- DR – the image is captured and is immediately electronically processed as a digital image.
- CR – the image is captured within a cassette on an image plate and processed as a digital image. An external reading device is needed to generate the digital image.

Mammography with CR technology is used nationally and internationally, and currently accounts for 24 percent of all mammography machines in the province of Ontario.

**4. What does this mean for women who have been screened with CR mammography?**

Mammography as a breast cancer screening test remains the most effective way to detect breast cancer in average risk women.

The chance of having an undiagnosed cancer in women who have been screened with mammography using CR technology is extremely low.

Women can receive information from the clinic where they were last screened to find out what type of mammography technology they were last screened with and their choices regarding their next screening appointment. A list of all clinics that offer breast mammography is available at [www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram). Women can also contact Cancer Care Ontario at 1-800-668-9304 Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. for more information.

**5. When should women have breast screening?**

The Ontario Breast Screening Program recommends that women aged 50 to 74 years have a screening mammogram every two years. Women aged 30 to 69 years who have been identified as being at high risk for breast cancer should have a screening mammogram and breast MRI every year.

**6. As a woman, who should I speak to if I have questions?**

Women can receive information from the clinic where they were last screened to find out what type of mammography technology they were last screened with and their choices regarding their next screening appointment. A list of all clinics that offer breast mammography is available at [www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram). Women can also contact Cancer Care Ontario at 1-800-668-9304 Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. for more information.

**7. Am I at risk? Has my health been compromised?**

The chance of having an undiagnosed cancer in women who have been screened with mammography using CR technology is extremely low. The transition to mammography using DR technology is based on a commitment to continuous quality improvement and not any safety issues associated with CR mammography devices.

**8. How do I find out what technology was used for my last screen?**

Women can receive information from the clinic where they were last screened to find out what type of mammography technology they were last screened with and their choices regarding their next screening appointment. A list of all clinics that offer breast mammography is available

at [www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram). Women can also contact Cancer Care Ontario at 1-800-668-9304 Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. for more information.

**9. What if my appointment for mammography is planned in the next six months before equipment may be replaced?**

Women can receive information from the clinic where they were last screened to find out what type of mammography technology they were last screened with and their choices regarding their next screening appointment. A list of all clinics that offer breast mammography is available at [www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram). Women can also contact Cancer Care Ontario at 1-800-668-9304 Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. for more information.

**10. Should I be rescreened if my last mammogram used CR technology?**

The chance of having an undiagnosed cancer in women who have been screened with mammography using CR is extremely low.

Women can receive information from the clinic where they were last screened to find out what type of mammography technology they were last screened with and their choices regarding their next screening appointment. A list of all clinics that offer breast mammography is available at [www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram). Women can also contact Cancer Care Ontario at 1-800-668-9304 Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. for more information.

**11. How do I find out what technology will be used for my upcoming screen?**

Women can receive information from the clinic where they were last screened to find out what type of mammography technology they were last screened with and their choices regarding their next screening appointment. A list of all clinics that offer breast mammography is available at [www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram). Women can also contact Cancer Care Ontario at 1-800-668-9304 Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. for more information.

**12. Where do I go for a DR or screen film mammogram?**

Women can receive information from the clinic where they were last screened to find out what type of mammography technology they were last screened with and their choices regarding their next screening appointment. A list of all clinics that offer breast mammography is available at [www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/mammogram). Women can also contact Cancer Care Ontario at 1-800-668-9304 for more information.

**13. Is there a risk that I may have been overexposed to radiation if I was screened with CR mammography?**

No. The recommendation to transition to mammography with DR technology is related to screening effectiveness and not related to equipment safety. The benefits of detecting breast cancer early far outweigh the harms, in terms of the amount of radiation needed for the mammogram.

**14. Will I be exposed to a higher dosage of radiation with the new DR technology?**

No. All studies have shown high-quality mammography to be very safe.

**15. Is there a physical difference/experience between the technologies for women?**

No. The physical experience of mammography is the same for women regardless of the technology that is used. The difference is related to the way the mammogram image is developed.