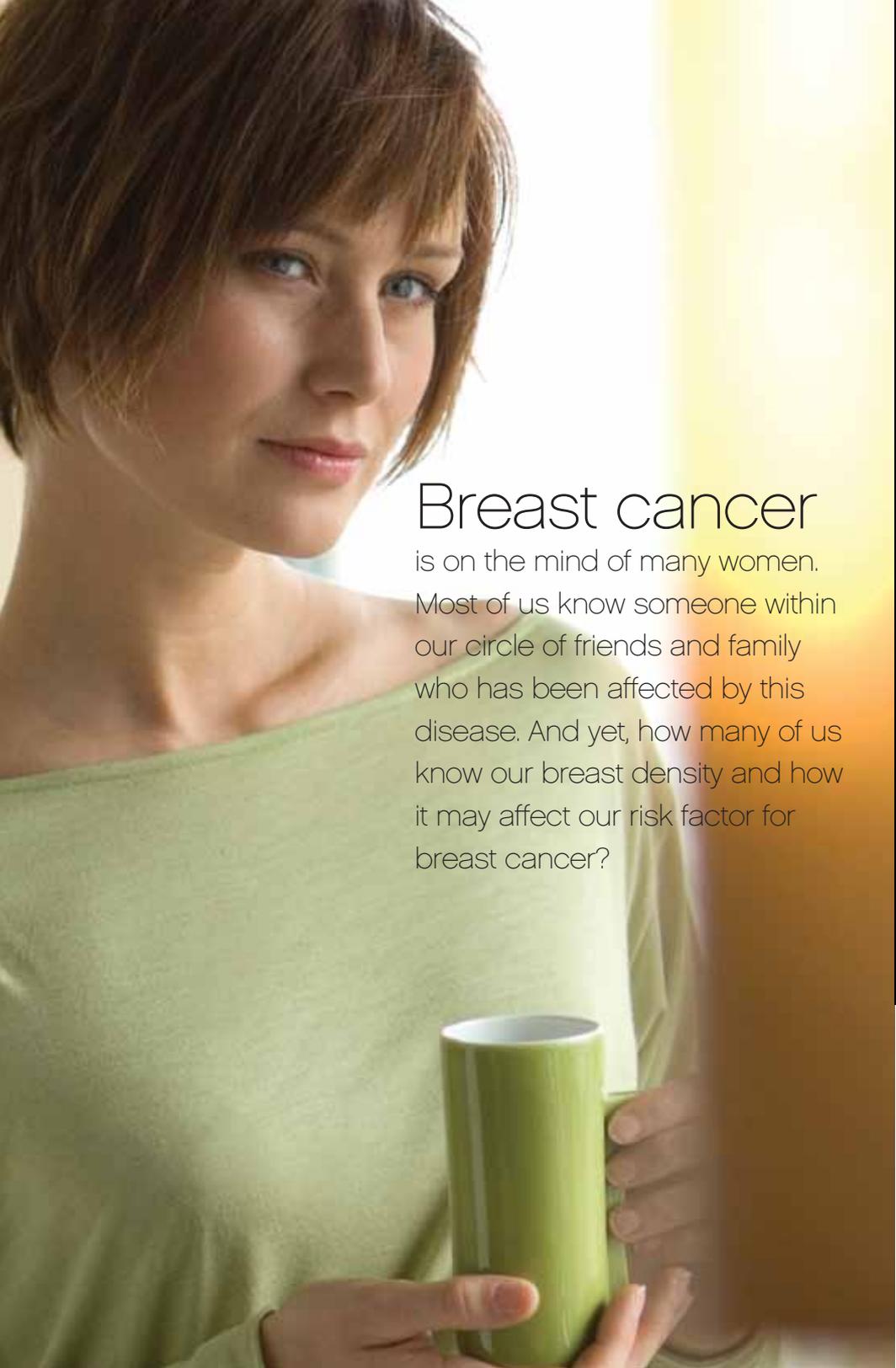


What You Should Know
Breast Density



Breast cancer

is on the mind of many women. Most of us know someone within our circle of friends and family who has been affected by this disease. And yet, how many of us know our breast density and how it may affect our risk factor for breast cancer?

What are the risk factors for breast cancer?

There are risk factors for breast cancer that can be controlled, and those that cannot. Some things that we can manage are weight, diet, exercise and smoking. We cannot control our age or gender, nor can we control our genetic makeup. Our genetic code can influence our breast tissue composition, or breast density. Dense breasts are considered a very strong risk factor for breast cancer and put a woman at nearly four times the risk of getting the disease compared to women with fatty breasts.¹ Breast density changes over a woman's life and usually decreases with age.

What is the breast made up of?

The breast is composed of various types of structures including lobules, ducts and fatty tissue. Lobules are the structures that produce milk; the ducts are tiny tubes that carry the milk to the nipple. The lobules and the ducts together are commonly referred to as fibroglandular tissue. The space between the lobules and ducts are filled with fatty tissue. In addition, the breast contains blood vessels and lymph vessels for drainage. There are also Cooper's ligaments, which support the breast tissue against the chest wall.

What is breast density?

Breast density is defined as the relative amount of different tissues in the breast.² A dense breast has more fibroglandular tissue than it has fatty tissue. The fibroglandular tissue is where most breast cancers are found.³

How do I know if I have dense breasts?

In a mammography image, the fibroglandular tissue appears white in the image, while other structures appear in various shades of gray to black. The radiologist reading your mammogram will visually assess your density from the images, and classify your breast density as mostly fat, scattered fibroglandular tissue, heterogeneously dense or extremely dense. You may hear the term 'BI-RADS' to describe your breast density. This classification may be reported to your referring physician, or directly to you with the results of your mammogram. Some physicians use computer software to assist them in determining breast density.

What should I do if I have dense breasts?

The American Cancer Society and other organizations recommend that women have annual screening mammograms starting at age 40, and continue for as long as a woman is in good health.⁴ It can be more difficult to interpret a mammogram in a woman with dense breasts. The “whiteness” obstructs the view of the breast tissue lying beneath it, making it harder to discern any areas of concern. Discuss your breast density with your physician, and follow his or her recommendations.

For a woman with dense breasts, the screening mammogram may lead to additional imaging procedures. These may include additional mammography images, digital breast tomosynthesis, breast ultrasound or breast MRI. These imaging studies are used to see through the fibroglandular tissue better, and to pick up small, early cancers that may be hidden behind the dense tissue. Finding earlier and smaller cancers may lead to increased survival, as well as less traumatic and less costly treatment of the disease.



**What
should I ask my doctor?**

Your doctor can determine your individual breast density from a mammogram. After your next mammogram, ask your doctor about your breast density assessment and what your breast cancer risk factors may be.

¹ Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2011-2012, American Cancer Society, USA

² Cancer.gov. In dictionary section. Retrieved from www.cancer.gov/dictionary?Cdrid=335487

³ Cancer.gov. In dictionary section. Retrieved from www.cancer.gov/dictionary?Cdrid=444971

⁴ Cancer.org. Cancer Screening Guidelines. 2012. Retrieved from www.cancer.org/Healthy/FindCancerEarly/CancerScreeningGuidelines/index

BI-RADS Categories And Example Breast Images

What is BI-RADS?

Breast density is classified using the BI-RADS (American College of Radiology Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System) scoring method.

Below are the four breast density classification categories.

1 - Entirely fat

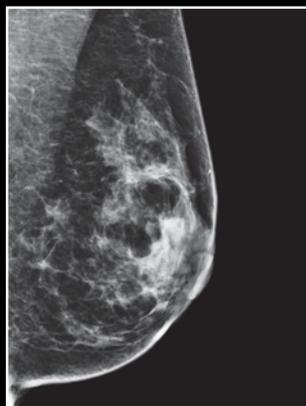
3 - Heterogeneously dense

2 - Scattered fibroglandular densities

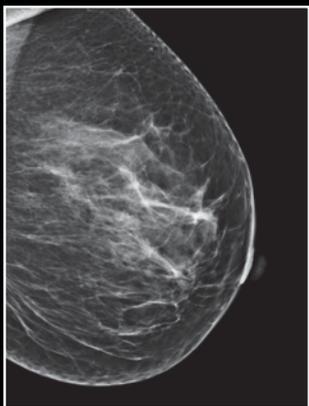
4 - Extremely dense



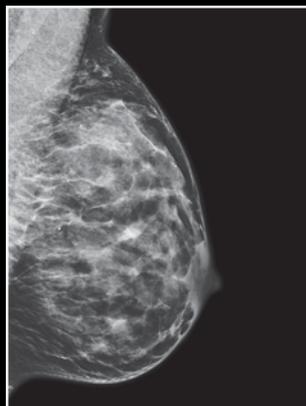
BI-RADS 1
<25% DENSITY
FATTY BREAST



BI-RADS 2
<50% DENSITY
SCATTERED DENSITY



BI-RADS 3
>50% DENSITY
HETEROGENEOUSLY DENSE



BI-RADS 4
>75% DENSITY
EXTREMELY DENSE

Early Detection is the Key

Our primary goal has always been to deliver the
highest quality care to our patients.

That's why we have chosen the best technology
available for breast imaging, breast density
assessment, ultrasound and MRI – from
Hologic®, the leader in breast cancer diagnosis
and treatment. Please call your imaging center
to schedule your annual mammogram.

For additional information on breast health, call the
American Cancer Society at 1.800.ACS.2345
or visit www.cancer.org.

You can learn more
by visiting www.hologic.com.