

OVER-DETECTION IN BREAST CANCER SCREENING

Mammograms and over-detection:

- Mammograms are an important screening test for breast cancer.
- Screening mammograms can find cases of cancer early.
- When tumors are detected early, treatment is often easier and works better.
- Mammograms can be so sensitive that they can find small tumors that would not affect a woman's life.

What is over-detection?

- Over-detection is when a tumor is found by a screening mammogram that would not have caused clinical symptoms or death.
- Over-detection is also called over-diagnosis or over-treatment.

Can you tell which tumors are not going to spread?

- It is difficult to tell on a mammogram which tumors are dangerous and which ones are not, so we treat all the same.
- Some tumors will not grow or spread fast enough to affect a woman's life.
- In this way, over-detection can lead to unnecessary treatment, which is a potential harm of getting a screening mammogram.

What does this mean for me?

- Talk to your medical provider about the benefits and risks of having a mammogram. Over-detection is a potential harm of having a mammogram.