What Is a Mammogram?
An X-ray picture of the breast is called a mammogram. It helps doctors find changes and tumors in the breast before you can feel them yourself. Also, if you notice something unusual in your breast self-exam, mammograms can help doctors find out if there is anything abnormal. Mammograms are an important tool for finding breast cancer at the earliest, most curable stage.

Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI) patients can choose a regular digital mammogram only or a 3D mammogram with a regular digital mammogram.

3D mammography, also known as digital breast tomosynthesis, was approved by the FDA in 2011. A 3D mammogram gives much more detail. It is always performed with a regular mammogram and does not replace it. For more information, call the Breast Care Center at 801-587-4602 or the Cancer Learning Center at 1-888-424-2100.

What Is Getting a Mammogram Like?
When you have a mammogram, you will need to remove your clothing from the waist up and change into a hospital gown. To take the picture, your breast is pressed between two plates attached to the mammogram machine. The technologist usually takes two pictures of each breast, one from the top and one from the side. The pressure lasts only a few seconds. The entire process takes 10 to 15 minutes.

Do Mammograms Hurt?
The pressure can feel uncomfortable or even painful for some people. But it lasts only a few seconds. If you have pain, talk to the technologist taking the pictures. The technologist can help make you as comfortable as possible.

The pressure is important for good mammograms. It holds your breast still during the picture and flattens the breast tissue. These steps make the picture sharper and keep your exposure to x-rays as low as possible.

Mammograms for Screening
Getting mammograms to look for breast cancer is called breast cancer screening. Doctors called radiologists check the mammograms. They look for changes in the breast that can lead to cancer and for tumors that are too small to feel. If they find an abnormal area, the Breast Care Center will call you.

Ask your doctor when you should start breast cancer screening and how often to get a mammogram.

Mammograms for Diagnosis
If screening shows an abnormal area, doctors often ask for more pictures, zoomed in for a close-up of that area. These diagnostic mammograms help identify the problem. They are also used when a lump, nipple discharge, or skin thickening raises concerns about breast cancer.

Breast ultrasound. Sometimes the doctor needs an ultrasound image of the breast along with the diagnostic mammograms. For this test, a doctor glides a small device over your skin. The device sends out sound waves (too high for the human ear to hear) and picks up the echoes that bounce off body tissues. A computer changes the sound waves into a black-and-white image. After reviewing the images, a radiologist will go over the results with you and answer your questions.

For More Information
- To speak with someone in the Breast Care Center, call 801-587-4602.
- To schedule a mammogram, call 801-581-5496.
- For answers to any cancer-related question, call the Cancer Learning Center at 801-581-6365 or 1-888-424-2100.

How to Prepare for Your Appointment
- Don’t use deodorant, lotion, or powder on your breasts or underarms the day of your appointment.
- Plan enough time for the appointment. Screening appointments take 20 to 30 minutes. Diagnostic appointments can take up to an hour.
- Check in at the Breast Care Center on the third floor of the Cancer Hospital.
- Tell your technologist before the mammogram if you have had any type of breast surgery such as a lumpectomy, mastectomy, or breast implants.