

## PATIENT HANDOUT

### Weighing benefit and harms: Mammography for women, ages 40–49

For every 1000 women in their 40s, what are the benefits and harms of mammogram screening over a period of 10 years?

	<b>WITH MAMMOGRAMS OVER 10 YEARS</b>	<b>WITHOUT MAMMOGRAMS OVER 10 YEARS</b>	<b>LIVES SAVED PER 1000 WOMEN SCREENED WITH MAMMOGRAMS OVER 10 YEARS</b>
<b>BENEFIT OF MAMMOGRAMS</b>	<b>Breast cancer death</b>	<b>Breast cancer death</b>	
• Less likely to die from breast cancer <sup>1</sup>	Black women 3.6 White women 2.1 Other women 1.3	Black women 4.2 White women 2.5 Other women 1.5	Less than 1 Less than 1 Less than 1
<b>HARMS OF MAMMOGRAMS</b>	<b>Harms of screening</b>		
• More likely to have false alarms <sup>2</sup>	450	None	
• More likely to have unnecessary diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer <sup>3</sup>	5	None	
• More likely to have pain or discomfort from mammography <sup>4</sup>	320-550	None	
• More likely to have radiation exposure <sup>5</sup>	1000	None	
• More likely to have false reassurance <sup>6</sup>	Uncertain	None	

<sup>1</sup>The benefit of mammograms may be larger if you are at higher risk, or the benefit of mammograms may be smaller or even zero if the best quality research studies are correct.

<sup>2</sup>False alarms are abnormal results that are not cancer, leading to unnecessary repeat mammograms, biopsies, and worry.

<sup>3</sup>Not all cancer detected by mammography will cause symptoms or death. This is because not all cancers will continue to grow or spread.  
Doctors cannot always tell which cancers detected by mammography need treatment and which do not need treatment.

<sup>4</sup>Many women complain of temporary discomfort or pain during mammography because the breasts are squeezed.

<sup>5</sup>All mammography uses radiation. Doctors do not know whether this radiation causes cancer, but most doctors believe the harm is very small or nonexistent.

<sup>6</sup>Some women who develop breast cancer before their next screening mammogram might delay treatment because their previous mammogram was normal.