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# MY MAMMOGRAM REPORT SAYS I HAVE DENSE BREASTS.

## Now what?

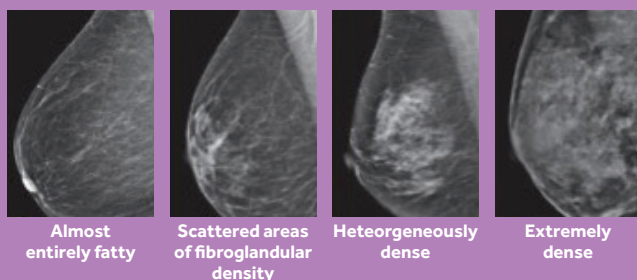


# Does having dense breasts mean I need more tests?

The answer depends on your category of density as well as factors that may increase your breast cancer risk. There are four categories on the "density scale," based on the proportion of two types of breast tissue:

- ④ Fatty tissue
- ④ Fibroglandular tissue, which includes:
  - The milk glands and ducts
  - Muscle tissue
  - Connective tissue

Dense breasts have more fibroglandular tissue. The chart below shows the four categories of density.



## What do the categories of breast density mean?

To help women and their doctors better understand breast density, the associated risks, and the right approach to screening for each patient, the American College of Radiology has defined four categories of density:

- ④ Almost entirely fatty: less than 25 percent of the breast tissue is fibroglandular (approximately 10 percent of women)
- ④ Scattered areas of fibroglandular density: 25–50 percent fibroglandular tissue (approximately 40 percent of women)
- ④ Heterogeneously dense: 50–75 percent fibroglandular tissue (approximately 40 percent of women)
- ④ Extremely dense: more than 75 percent fibroglandular tissue (approximately 10 percent of women)

## Should I have a 3D mammogram? And do I need any other tests?

The enhanced early detection capabilities of 3D mammograms benefit all women, but especially those in the heterogeneously dense or extremely dense categories. As of August 2018, health insurers in New Jersey are now required by law to cover 3D screening mammograms—including 3D SmartMamm™ at Princeton Radiology. When breast cancer is suspected, the law also requires 3D diagnostic mammograms to be covered regardless of age.

For women in the heterogeneously dense or extremely dense categories, there are two important considerations. First, having dense breast tissue is itself associated with a somewhat increased risk of breast cancer. Second, dense breast tissue makes early-stage cancers harder to detect on a mammogram. Dense tissue appears white on a mammogram. Lumps, both benign and cancerous, also appear white.

As a result, doctors may recommend more screenings in addition to the mammogram, such as breast ultrasound or breast MRI—especially for those who also have factors in their personal or family medical history that increase their breast cancer risk.

## If my doctor recommends breast MRI or breast ultrasound, do I still need a mammogram every year?

Yes. Research continues to support annual mammograms as the "gold standard" for early detection. Additional screenings are supplementary. Although they may reveal abnormalities that are difficult to see in a mammogram, they do not replace mammograms.

