

Mayo Clinic Minute: What is molecular breast imaging and who needs it?

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Mammography screening for breast cancer saves lives. But another test may be better for women with dense breasts. Dr. Deborah Rhodes, an internal medicine specialist from the Breast Diagnostic Clinic at Mayo

Clinic, says that data from a study being done at Mayo Clinic and other centers across the country suggest that molecular breast imaging may also be better than 3-D mammography.

"MBI is a relatively new tool for imaging the [breast](#) that was designed to overcome the limitations of mammography for imaging the dense breast," says Rhodes.

You see, dense breast tissue and cancer both appear white on a mammogram.

"So this tool [images](#) the breast in such a way that the tumors stand out from the background tissue and are not obscured by overlying breast density," says Rhodes.

Two large studies showed that MBI detected three to four times more cancers than mammography in women with dense tissue.

How do you know if you have dense breasts?

"Lots of women will say to me: 'Oh, I have [dense breasts](#). I can tell by the way they feel because they're lumpy.' But that actually does not correlate with the density of the tissue. Dense tissue is defined solely by the mammographic appearance of the breast. The more white tissue on the mammogram, the denser the breast," says Rhodes.

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