

# Short Term Follow-up After Breast Imaging

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## My radiologist recommended “short term follow-up” after my breast imaging test. What does this mean?

**Short term follow-up** is a recommendation that your radiologist may give you after looking at the results of your breast imaging test (such as a mammogram or ultrasound). A **radiologist** is a doctor who checks for disease by looking at medical images. They will give you this recommendation if your test results show that your breast tissue is “probably benign.”

Short term follow-up is a safe and effective way to avoid unnecessary **biopsies** (procedures that cut out tissue samples) and also find cancer early if there are changes on your mammogram or ultrasound.

- Your radiologist will ask you to come back for more breast imaging tests in 6 months, 12 months, and 24 months.
- If your “probably benign” area goes away or stays the same over this time, you will return to getting a regular screening mammogram every year. If there is a change in your imaging, your provider may recommend a biopsy.
- If your radiologist recommended short term follow-up imaging, our staff will contact you soon to schedule your next appointment.

## What does “probably benign” mean?

If the result of your breast imaging test is “**probably benign**,” it means that the chance of that tissue being cancer is 2% or less. In other words, it’s probably not cancer or very unlikely to be cancer. A “probably benign” result is

also called **BI-RADS 3**, or a category 3 result on the Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System (BI-RADS) scale (which goes from 0 to 6).

“Probably benign” results are common on your first mammogram, after surgery or trauma, or if you have not had a mammogram in several years. Your results are expected to stay the same over time, but your radiologist will recommend short term follow-up imaging to be extra safe and see if anything does change.

### **Why did I receive this recommendation for short term follow-up?**

You received this recommendation because there was something on your mammogram or ultrasound that the radiologist thought was “probably benign” (BI-RADS 3).

### **What kinds of things could be “probably benign” in my breast imaging results?**

“Probably benign” results most commonly include breast calcifications, asymmetric breast tissue, breast masses, or fat necrosis.

#### **Calcifications**

- Calcifications are very small pieces of calcium in your breast that look like tiny white dots on a mammogram. These are best seen with magnified (zoomed in and enlarged) mammogram pictures.
- Breast calcifications are very common, and many of these calcifications are **benign** (not cancer).
- There are many shapes and patterns of calcifications. “Probably benign” calcifications are almost certainly not cancer, but we want to make sure by looking at them closely at your next mammogram.

#### **Asymmetric breast tissue (also called an asymmetry)**

- Asymmetric breast tissue means that there is an area of your breast that looks different than the rest of your breast tissue.

- An asymmetry is most likely normal tissue (not cancer).

### Masses

- Masses are lumps in your breast. Sometimes you can feel them, but sometimes you can only see them on a mammogram or ultrasound.
- Some breast masses may look benign (non-cancerous). Benign masses have a smooth border and oval shape.
- Common benign masses include **fibroadenomas** (solid lumps of tissue) or small clusters of **cysts** (small fluid-filled sacs). These masses can stay safely in the breast, and they are not cancerous.

### Fat necrosis

- Fat necrosis can happen when fat tissue in your breast is injured, usually from trauma or surgery. You may not remember a specific accident, but fat necrosis can show up on a mammogram, or you may feel a lump.
- Fat necrosis is benign (not cancer).

### Why is it important to return for my short term follow-up imaging?

While your risk of cancer in the “probably benign” category is very low, it is still not 0%. Short term follow-up imaging helps us make sure you get the best care.

### Where can I learn more?

You can read more about BI-RADS and your mammogram results at the link below or by scanning the QR code.

[cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/mammograms/understanding-your-mammogram-report.html](https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/mammograms/understanding-your-mammogram-report.html)



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