

Contrast Enhanced Mammography (CEM)

What is Contrast Enhanced Mammography?

Contrast enhanced mammography (CEM) is a type of digital mammogram that takes x-ray pictures of the inside of your breast using a contrast dye. The dye makes it easier to see new blood vessels that form when a cancer grows. CEM may be done to find cancers not seen with a regular digital mammogram. In some cases, CEM can replace Breast MRI imaging.

CEM may be suggested to:

- Evaluate lumps that are found during a physical exam
- Screen for breast cancer in women who are at increased risk for this type of cancer
- Evaluate patients who have dense breasts

What should I expect during my Contrast Enhanced Mammography?

- A contrast enhanced mammogram is like your annual digital mammogram. Your breasts will be positioned and compressed (squeezed) in the same way.
- Before taking each x-ray picture, a contrast dye will be injected in your arm through an IV. You may feel a warm sensation while getting the IV contrast, this is normal. This contrast helps show the internal structures of your breast.
- The Radiologist who reads your x-ray pictures will look for areas where the contrast collects.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

What are the benefits of Contrast Enhanced Mammography?

- CEM can help find areas in your breast where cancers may not be seen on a mammogram alone.
- CEM can help the Radiologist decide what areas need further evaluation if your regular digital mammogram shows areas of concern.
- CEM is a cost-effective way to look at your breast. Before, only an MRI could be used for this type of imaging when a patient needed to have a contrast breast study.
- CEM provides a way for patients to have this type of imaging test done, if they are unable to have an MRI due to reasons such as claustrophobia, allergy to MRI contrast, or metal in their body.

Are there any risks with Contrast Enhanced Mammography?

- You are exposed to a little more radiation with CEM, than with a regular digital mammogram.
- Some people may have an allergic reaction to the contrast dye used for this test. The contrast dye given during this test is like the dye used for a CT scan. It is important to tell your doctor or provider before having this exam, if you have had any type of allergic reaction to this.
- IV contrast can affect how your kidneys work. If you have any kidney problems, you may be unable to have a contrast enhanced mammogram.