What is a mammogram?
A mammogram is a special type of x-ray that looks for breast cancer, which is the most common cancer among women. The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends that women get mammograms every other year beginning at age 50.

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Mammograms
Should my loved one get one?
What are the benefits?

Early detection of breast cancer

The ability to intervene before the breast cancer gets worse or spreads

Is this different for women with Down syndrome?

There are no formal recommendations on breast cancer screening for women with Down syndrome. We do, however, know that the chances that a woman with Down syndrome will develop breast cancer is significantly lower than the general population.

A recent study showed that of 993 mammograms done in women with Down syndrome, only 2 were found to have cancer. That means <1% of the women in this study who got a mammogram had breast cancer.

This means that the risks of doing mammograms on women with Down syndrome may be higher than the benefits.

So what does this mean?

For women with Down syndrome with no family history of breast cancer, this means that we may not have to do mammograms as frequently as we do for women without Down syndrome. You should discuss the risks and benefits with your loved one’s doctor.

What are the risks?

Radiation exposure

Uncomfortable for the patient

A false positive result (where there is an abnormality detected, but the patient does not actually have breast cancer) may result in unnecessary biopsies and procedures