

Thermography : Screening for Womens Breast Health

Current health news and the statistics reported on breast cancer present a bleak future with few new options. Every year in Canada, 23 300 women are diagnosed with breast cancer; 5300 die of the disease. Breast cancer touches the lives of everyone; one in nine women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. In Canada, there are no breast cancer screening options for young women. Although women over 50 are routinely offered mammograms, approximately 4500 or 19% of all women diagnosed with breast cancer are under the age of 49; nearly 1000 are less than 40.

Also of concern is the risk associated with radiation exposure due to mammograms. Among other factors, research links breast cancer to diet, toxic exposure and exposure to radiation. For women seeking alternatives to mammography and those seeking preventative screening for breast health, thermography offers a real alternative.

What is Thermography?

Thermography is a non-invasive diagnostic technique that detects skin temperature and displays it as an image, which reflects underlying inflammation and metabolic activity. Thermograms are usually interpreted by medical specialists. Best known as an adjunctive procedure for early detection of breast cancer, thermography also provides important insight into cardio-vascular and neuro-muscular functions of the body.

What is Breast Thermography?

When used to visualize inflammation and metabolic activity within breast tissue, thermography has no match within current medical practice. Thermography is able to detect the vascular changes which precede the formation of a lump by 5 to 7 years; this occurs because a growing tumor needs an enhanced blood supply, and this increase in metabolism is easily detected as increased heat on the surface of the breast. The thermogram is non-specific as to the cause of the increased heat, with other possible causes being infection, inflammatory disease, or trauma. The identification of increased metabolism needs to be correlated with other medical diagnostic interventions. While these early metabolic changes frequently cannot be seen or supported by mammography or ultra sound investigation, they do provide the opportunity to implement life-style changes and preventative therapies. Under the direction of trained health care practitioners, breast massage, dietary changes, homeopathy, acupuncture, life-style changes and emotional counseling are all effective, preventative breast-cancer therapies.

Studies show that when thermography is added to a woman's regular breast health exams (physical exams, mammography and thermography), 95% of all early stage cancers can be detected.

Who Should Consider Breast Thermography?

Breast thermography is for women who choose to monitor their breast health throughout their lives, especially those who would prefer to avoid the known adverse effects of radiation. Women with a family history of breast cancer will welcome its safety and the comfort of regular screenings. For young women, it is a safe and accessible procedure capable of indicating abnormal breast tissue long before they are eligible for screening with mammography. It is the preferred screening procedure for women with breast implants, as there is a risk of implant puncture or leaking associated with the compression required by mammography. In Canada, although mammography is recommended routinely for women over 50, women less than 40 have few options for early breast screening. Thermography is for those who are interested in early detection of breast cancer. Studies show that with early detection and treatment, cure rates of greater than 95% are possible.

The non-invasive nature of thermography allows for easy monitoring with repeat scans. One can compare changes within breast tissue over time and track the effectiveness of preventative therapies. Well researched and documented, breast thermography correlates well with other diagnostic tests. Breast thermography is not a stand-alone diagnostic test; if a thermogram indicates abnormal breast tissue, follow-up mammography and clinical examination is necessary. Thermography has a 90% sensitivity rate; this means in 90% of cases, the scan accurately indicates the presence or absence of the disease.

For women interested in preventing or accessing early treatment for breast cancer, thermography offers important information needed to make decisions about their own health.

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