

BROADCAST-New Dense Breast Notification Law Takes Effect Jan 1

Mammography remains the gold-standard imaging tool for early detection of breast cancer but for some women, they might need additional screening. That includes women who have dense breasts.

A new law taking effect January 1 requires any facility that offers mammograms to notify women if the results show they have dense breasts. Illinois' law is the first to direct women to their breast imaging health care provider for information about the notification. Previous laws have directed women to their referring doctor for questions.

Radiologist Jessica Guingrich, Medical Director of OSF HealthCare's Center for Breast Health in Peoria, says traditional mammography can't always detect cancer in women who have dense

"We're trying to find white findings so the denser tissues means there's more whiteness in the background and it's harder to see those white findings," Dr. Guingrich explains. (:10)

According to the [American Cancer Society](#), women who have dense breast tissue have a "slightly" higher risk of developing breast cancer than those who do not.

Dr. Guingrich says breast density has a very specific medical definition and the only way to know what category you fall into is to get a mammogram. Specifically, she says dense breasts have more fibrous tissue than fatty tissue.

"The density actually has nothing to do with how they feel on physical exam or the breast size. It actually has to do with that appearance on the mammogram," according to Dr. Guingrich. (:07)

So what are the best options for women who receive the notification? Dr. Guingrich says that will depend on a woman's risk factors.

"Like if one has a first-degree relative or a pre-menopausal relative diagnosed with breast cancer or if they have a personal history of breast cancer, those women are at higher risk. If a lady is a gene carrier or if a lady has had chest wall radiation." (:16)

Guingrich says 3D mammography uses multiple X-ray images to create a sharper image that shows tissue structures in more detail. It has greatly increased cancer detection rates.

Illinois is one of seven states nationwide that has an insurance mandate that requires coverage for 3D mammography and whole breast ultrasound.