

What Are Breast Calcifications?

Calcifications are tiny deposits of calcium that form in breast tissue. Calcium from your diet does not cause breast calcifications. A number of things can cause calcium deposits in your breast. Possible causes include:

- Normal aging
- Inflammation
- Past trauma to the area
- Masses in the breast:
both cancer and not cancer

About Calcium Deposits

- They do not cause pain.
- They are too small to be felt during a routine breast exam.
- They are common, especially after menopause.
- They usually are not cancer.
- Certain types of breast calcifications may suggest breast cancer.

For more information
please call your provider.

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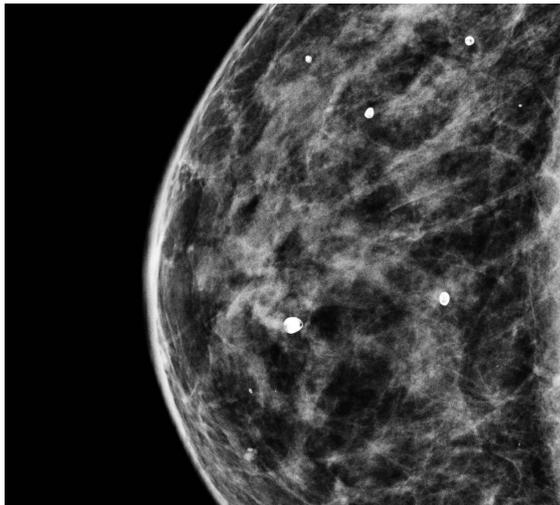
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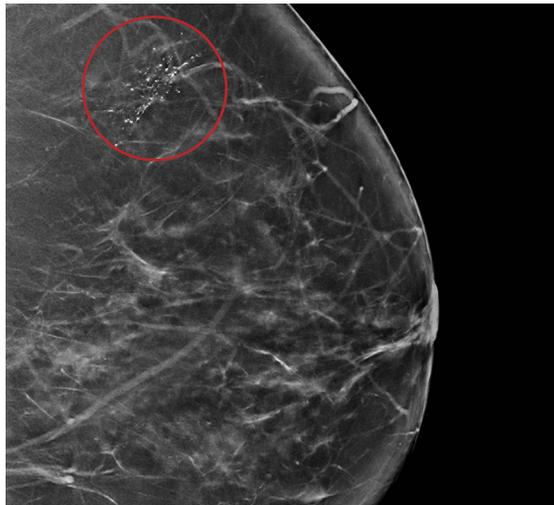
Breast Calcifications

Two types of breast calcifications are usually found with a mammogram.



Macrocalcifications

- Look like large white dots on a mammogram
- Are often spread randomly within the breast
- Are found in about half of women over age 50 and in one out of ten women under age 50
- Are not thought to be related to cancer, so more testing is rarely needed



Microcalcifications

- Look like grains of salt on a mammogram
- Are usually not cancer, but if they appear in certain patterns and/or are clustered together, they can be a sign of early breast cancer
- May need magnified views to look at the calcifications more closely. May need follow-up tests.

How Are Breast Calcifications Managed?

Follow-up care depends on the type of calcifications seen.

Benign

These are not cancer and are thought to be harmless. No further testing or treatment is needed.

Probably Benign

These have a very small (less than 1 out of 50) risk of being cancer. Often, they will be rechecked every 6 months until shown to be stable. If no changes are seen, your doctor will most likely suggest you go back to routine, yearly mammograms.

Suspicious

Sometimes it is hard to tell if microcalcifications indicate a problem. In these cases, more testing may be needed. Your doctor may suggest that you have a biopsy. During a biopsy, a small amount of breast tissue with the calcium deposits is removed. It will be sent to the lab and checked for cancer cells.