FIVE FACTS:

3D Breast Ultrasound

1. The Facts

According to the National Cancer Institute, an estimated 40% of women have dense breasts, placing them at a significantly higher risk for developing breast cancer. For these women and some others with certain risk factors, a breast ultrasound, in addition to an annual mammogram, is recommended as a supplemental screening tool to optimize the detection of tumors at an early and more treatable stage.

2. What is 3D Breast Ultrasound?

3D breast ultrasound is a newer technique being used to detect abnormalities to provide accurate, operator-independent, 3-dimensional images of the entire breast in less than ten minutes. The ultrasound technology does not rely on a technician to operate the test, thereby reducing the risk of human error and enabling for more diagnostic information in less time.

3. Who Should be Screened

Women with very dense breasts can have up to a six times higher risk of developing breast cancer and should consider supplemental breast exams beyond mammography alone. Women with other risk factors, including possession of the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, a family and/or personal history of breast cancer, or prior benign masses should also consider regular ultrasound in addition to mammography.

4. Benefits

If any suspicious findings are detected on ultrasound, follow-up testing will examine the findings more closely to determine the most appropriate next steps. While additional testing can sometimes lead to false positive results, the potential benefits of finding a malignancy at an early, treatable stage are far greater.

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5. Implications for Most Women

Generally women who are younger and have dense breasts and/or other risk factors should speak to their OB-GYN about adding ultrasound to their annual breast screening. For many women who have non-dense breast tissue and no other risk factors, annual mammography after the age of 40, in addition to monthly breast self-exams may be sufficient.