



COVID-19 Vaccination and Mammography

Should a *Women's Way* client postpone or reschedule an appointment for her mammogram if she has recently received a COVID-19 vaccination? Not necessarily.

The vaccine that prevents COVID-19 can cause swollen lymph nodes under the arm in which the shot was given. Lymph nodes are part of the body's germ-fighting immune system. The swelling in the lymph nodes is a sign that the body is responding to the vaccine and building up defenses against the virus that causes COVID-19. Breast cancer also can cause swelling in the armpit if cancer cells spread to the lymph nodes. But that doesn't mean she should postpone or reschedule her mammogram appointment if she has received her vaccine. Instead, contact the facility where she usually schedules her mammogram to ask for guidance.

Because of the concern that having a mammogram soon after vaccination may cause unnecessary worry about swollen lymph nodes, some mammography facilities have recommended waiting four to six weeks after the final vaccine dose before having a mammogram. That way, any lymph node swelling caused by the vaccine has time to go away. This applies only to screening mammograms. If a *Women's Way* client has any breast symptoms such as a breast lump, she should not delay getting a mammogram.

Other facilities continue to schedule mammograms without waiting four to six weeks after the final COVID vaccination. But the health care provider should be notified of vaccination, the date it occurred, and which arm was affected. This information will be helpful for the radiologist who interprets the mammogram.

If lymph node swelling is found on the mammogram and a woman has recently received the COVID-19 vaccine, the radiologist who interprets the mammogram images will consider this when recommending whether additional imaging or follow-up is needed.

It is important not to delay breast cancer screenings regardless of what's happening in the world around us. Regular screening mammograms can aid in the early detection of breast cancer.