

Do I need to wear a thyroid shield during a mammogram?

Breast Imaging

Information for Patients

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What is a thyroid shield?

The thyroid gland is in your neck. A thyroid guard or thyroid shield is a soft lead collar that wraps around your neck to protect this gland when having an imaging procedure.

It is worn by patients and staff during some medical imaging scans to protect and block the thyroid gland from exposure to radiation.

A thyroid shield is the best way to minimise the risk of thyroid cancer from radiation exposure during certain procedures. Thyroid shields are commonly used during certain X-ray imaging, computerised tomography (CT) scan, fluoroscopy and dental X-rays.

Not all procedures that use radiation will need you to wear a thyroid shield.

Why is a thyroid shield not needed for a mammogram?

Mammogram machines have radiation shields inside which stop stray radiation, and are designed to make sure you are safe. The thyroid gland is not exposed to the direct X-ray beam; only the breast being examined will get an intentional dose of radiation during the X-ray.

Use of a thyroid shield is not recommended as very minimal radiation reaches the thyroid gland during the procedure, and therefore it does not need protection.

Wearing a thyroid shield during a mammogram may get in the way with your positioning and may cover (obscure) a part of your breast on the X-ray. The image obtained may not be helpful to the doctor, which means the mammogram would need to be repeated. This would result in you having an unnecessary dose of radiation to your breast, and therefore a greater risk than if you didn't wear a thyroid shield at all.

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