

## What are breast calcifications?

As women get older, they sometimes get tiny bits of calcium (called calcifications) in their breasts. They are too small to feel but can show up on a [mammogram](#) as small, bright white spots.

Most of the time, calcifications are harmless. But when they show up in certain patterns, they may cause concern and need more testing. For instance, tight clusters or lines of tiny calcifications can be a sign of breast cancer.

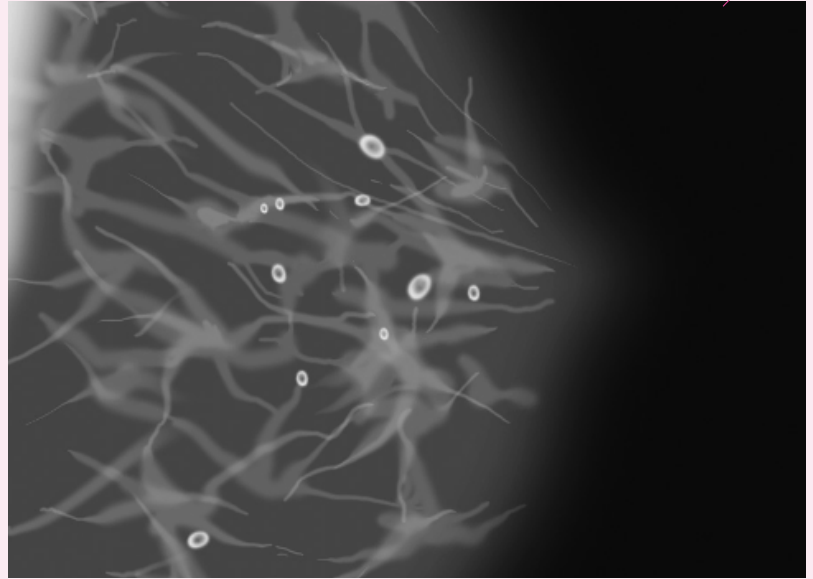
Calcifications are common in women, most often after age 50. They may be related to older age, past injury or an infection in the breast (mastitis). For women treated for breast cancer in the past, calcifications may also be related to past breast surgery or radiation therapy.

They are not related to the amount of calcium in a woman's diet.

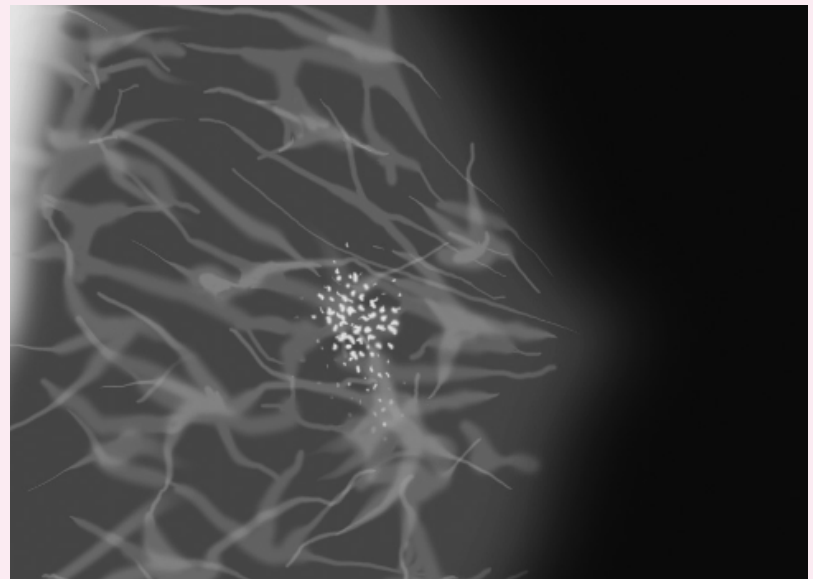
## Types of calcifications

There are two main types of calcifications: macro (see photo A) and micro (see photo B).

- Macrocalcifications look large and round on a mammogram. They are not usually related to cancer.
- Microcalcifications are small and may appear in clusters. They are usually benign (not cancerous) but can be a sign of breast cancer. Your doctor will note if they have changed over time. Follow-up tests may be needed to rule out breast cancer.



**Photo A:** Macrocalcifications are large and randomly spread throughout the breast. No follow-up care is needed.



**Photo B:** Microcalcifications are small, appear clustered. These may be a sign of breast cancer. A follow-up mammogram or a biopsy may be needed.

This fact sheet is intended to be a brief overview. For more information, visit [komen.org](http://komen.org) or call Susan G. Komen's Breast Care Helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET or email at [helpline@komen.org](mailto:helpline@komen.org). Se habla español.

## Resources

### Susan G. Komen®

1-877 GO KOMEN  
(1-877-465-6636)

[komen.org](https://www.komen.org)

### Questions to Ask the Doctor

[komen.org/questions](https://www.komen.org/questions)

## Related online resources

- [Breast Biopsy](#)
- [Breast Cancer Screening and Follow-up Tests](#)
- [Ductal Carcinoma in Situ](#)
- [Mammography](#)
- [What is Breast Cancer?](#)



## Suspicious microcalcifications

Sometimes it's hard to tell if microcalcifications are benign or a sign of breast cancer. More images may be needed to help decide if the microcalcifications are benign or suspicious for breast cancer.

If images look suspicious, more follow-up tests are needed. Follow-up tests may include a diagnostic mammogram, breast ultrasound or breast MRI. If any of the follow-up tests are suspicious, a biopsy will be needed to confirm or rule out breast cancer.

## Questions to ask your doctor

- How does my mammogram compare to my last one?
- Do you see any changes? If so, what are those changes?
- If I need to come back, what kinds of follow-up tests will I need?
- If I need a biopsy, what type of biopsy will I have?

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