

Breast Thermography

By: Philip Getson, DO & Liesha Getson, CTT

The American Cancer Society's (ACS) statistics on breast cancer are shocking. Every three minutes, in the United States alone, another woman is diagnosed with this dreaded disease, which annually claims the lives of more than 40,000 women.

With the incidences of breast cancer on the rise, and prevention now considered more valuable than cure, women are beginning to educate themselves on the option of including a thermogram in their annual checkup. This little known tool for risk assessment measures thermal emissions emanating from the body, a key indicator of health. Available here in the U.S, since the 1960's, it was approved in 1982 as an adjunct to mammography.

Thermography utilizes an infrared camera to take images of the breast without radiation, without compression or pain, and without side effects. It is the only breast test that evaluates pathology physiologically; meaning that it measures the function of the breast and its blood vessels, as opposed to all other available tests, which solely measure the anatomy (looking for tumors, cysts, etc.).

Thermography detects the physiologic changes in the breast tissue that have been shown to correlate with cancerous, or pre-cancerous, states. It is widely acknowledged that cancers, even in their earliest stages, need nutrients to maintain or accelerate their growth. In order to facilitate this process, blood vessels remain open, inactive blood vessels are activated, and new ones are formed, a process known as neoangiogenesis. This vascular process causes an increase in surface temperature in the affected regions, which can be viewed with infrared imaging cameras. Additionally, the newly formed or activated, blood vessels have a distinct appearance, which thermography can detect.

It is well documented in medicine that changes in physiology can occur 7-10 years before anatomic changes. This means that women (and men) have the opportunity to make changes in lifestyle, diet, nutrition, vitamin and mineral supplementation, etc., which can forestall, or even prevent the formation of tumors. In essence, individuals can be proactive in their own health.

In the last 30 years, there have been more than 800 reported peer-review studies on thermography, with more than 250,000 women evaluated. Some of these studies, which have followed women over a 12 year time period, conclude that breast thermography has been shown to be the single most important marker for detecting the development of breast cancer, and is eight times more significant than family history. Additionally, a thermogram has a 95% detection rate, when used as part of a multi-modal approach, using breast examination and anatomic testing. It is particularly valuable because it can be performed safely at age 20, thereby allowing for the detection of early stage breast cancer at its inception.

It is evident with the changed face of medicine, and the ever-increasing movement toward prevention, that women, who add thermography to their annual self-care checklist, will acquire the gentle ounce of prevention that far outweighs any pound of cure.