



## Rehearsal Guide

# Mammogram: A Picture of Health

*Preparing women with intellectual disability/autism  
(ID/A) to successfully complete a mammogram*

## Introduction for Caregivers

A rehearsal guide contains realistic pictures, concrete ideas, and clear, brief instructions for guiding a person through what can be expected in a specific situation. It includes helpful suggestions for caregivers to follow to make the experience meaningful for the person and increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. This approach is beneficial when supporting people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) who are anxious about situations such as doctors' appointments, hospitalizations, and medical testing.

A rehearsal guide provides opportunities for the caregiver to assist the person to learn about a specific situation. It contains information on what is needed and why and explains exactly what can be expected. Such a guide is most effective when it is person-centered and used in conjunction with discussion to allow exploration of specific areas of concern. It can be a powerful tool when used as intended.

The expected result is that the person will then experience the situation in a way that supports health and well-being by being prepared and knowing what to expect. The guide can be used at all stages of the situation to facilitate a positive end result.

Thank you for taking the time to use this tool to work with self-advocates to improve their health outcomes.

## How to Use This Rehearsal Guide

For best results, begin to review this rehearsal guide with the person prior to the day of the appointment. Sometimes it will help to review this material with an individual several days or weeks before an appointment; other times, it may be better to wait to review this material until just before the procedure is to take place, perhaps the day before or the morning of the procedure. Together with the individual, determine which will best suit the individual's needs and abilities in understanding the information provided; however, it is important not to wait until 5 minutes before a procedure to introduce this guide to an individual. Give the individual enough time in advance to become familiar with the procedure based on the pictures and information contained on each page and with the individual's abilities in mind.

It is best to review this guide slowly and to focus on one idea/page at a time, allowing the person to talk and/or ask questions after each idea/page is presented. A caregiver may want to share personal experiences related to having this procedure done but be sure to do so in a positive manner, depicting a positive outcome.

## For Best Practices

- ✓ Allot time to review this material when the individual is alert and interested in doing so.
- ✓ Ensure that the setting is free from distraction. Based on the individual's attention span, it may be best to review one page at a time, rather than reviewing an entire guide in one sitting.
- ✓ Explain each picture and practice the suggested exercises with the individual, such as deep breathing, as they appear throughout the guide.
- ✓ On the day of the procedure, take this guide along to continue rehearsing the various steps involved in the procedure. Review each page step by step.
- ✓ Remain positive, calm, and upbeat.
- ✓ Remember to offer positive reinforcement throughout the procedure. If the procedure is not able to be completed, focus on positive aspects. If the individual seems upset, talk about it later when they are calm to find out how they felt and what could be changed or improved to have a better outcome the next time.

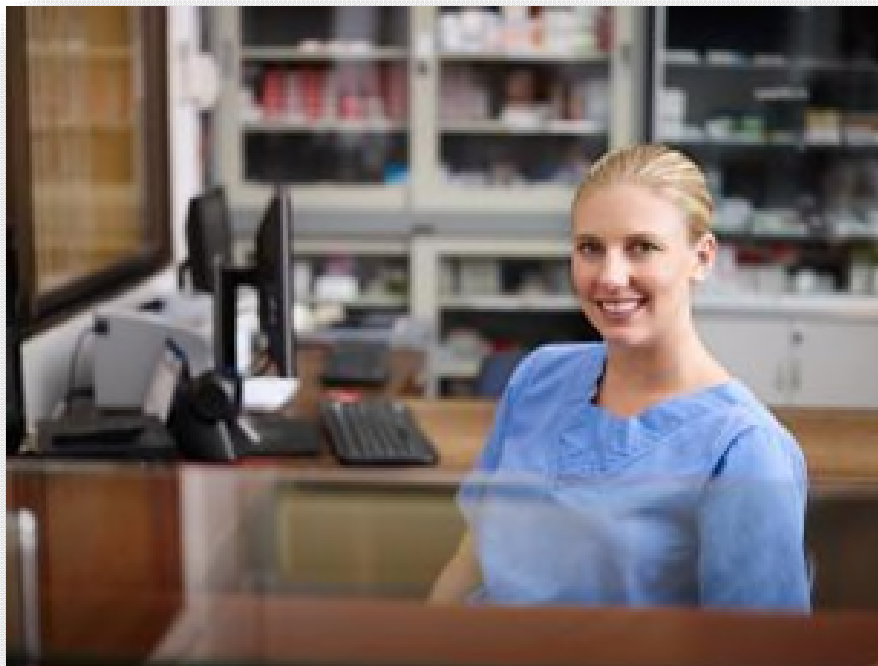
# Introducing the Process

*(Name of Individual)*, you are going to have special pictures called x-rays taken of your breasts on *(Insert date here)*.

The doctor ordered this test for you to help keep you healthy.

*(Name of caregiver)* will go with you and stay with you while you have the pictures taken.

These tests will take place at *(name of location)*.



**Note to Caregiver:** You may want to discuss your own personal experiences regarding having a mammogram. If so, keep the discussion upbeat and positive.

## Before You Go to the Appointment

It is important to be clean when you go for your x-ray. But you cannot wear deodorant, lotion, perfume, or powder anywhere below your neck or above your waist.

If you like, you may bring these items with you in a small bag to put on when your test is over.



**Note to Caregiver:** It is important to have the breast and underarm area clean, but free of anything topical such as lotion, deodorant, powder, or perfume. These items can contain ingredients that may show on the x-ray, making the results difficult for the doctor to read accurately.

## In the Waiting Room

When you first get to your appointment, you will have to wait until someone calls your name to have your picture taken.

(Name of caregiver) will stay in the waiting room with you.

Would you like to take a favorite book along to read or some of your favorite music to listen to on your headset while you wait?



# Changing into a Patient Gown



There will be people at this place who will tell you what you need to do. These people are friendly, and they are there to help you.

These people will tell you that you need to take off your shirt and bra and put on a patient gown before the pictures are taken.

It is okay to listen to these people, and (Name of caregiver) will be right there with you to assist you and make sure that you are all right.



**Note to Caregiver:** You may want to reassure the individual that the dressing room is private. Remember to be patient and to speak in a low, reassuring tone while assisting the individual

# When Your Name Is Called

When your name is called, you will be taken to a room with a big machine. There will be a technician there who will help you. She will take the x-ray pictures of your breasts when you are ready.





# Taking the X-Ray Picture

The technician who will be taking the x-ray pictures will help you stand the right way so the picture can be taken.



# Taking the X-Ray Picture

This technician is very friendly, and she will help place your breast in the machine. She will be touching your breast. This is not a bad thing.

(Name of caregiver) will be in the room with you.



**Note to Caregiver:** You will want to talk with the individual about how touching in private places is okay when it is for medical exams, like having an x-ray taken of your breast. The person who will touch you is a medical person, and she is there to help you. Stress that caregiver will be right there as well.

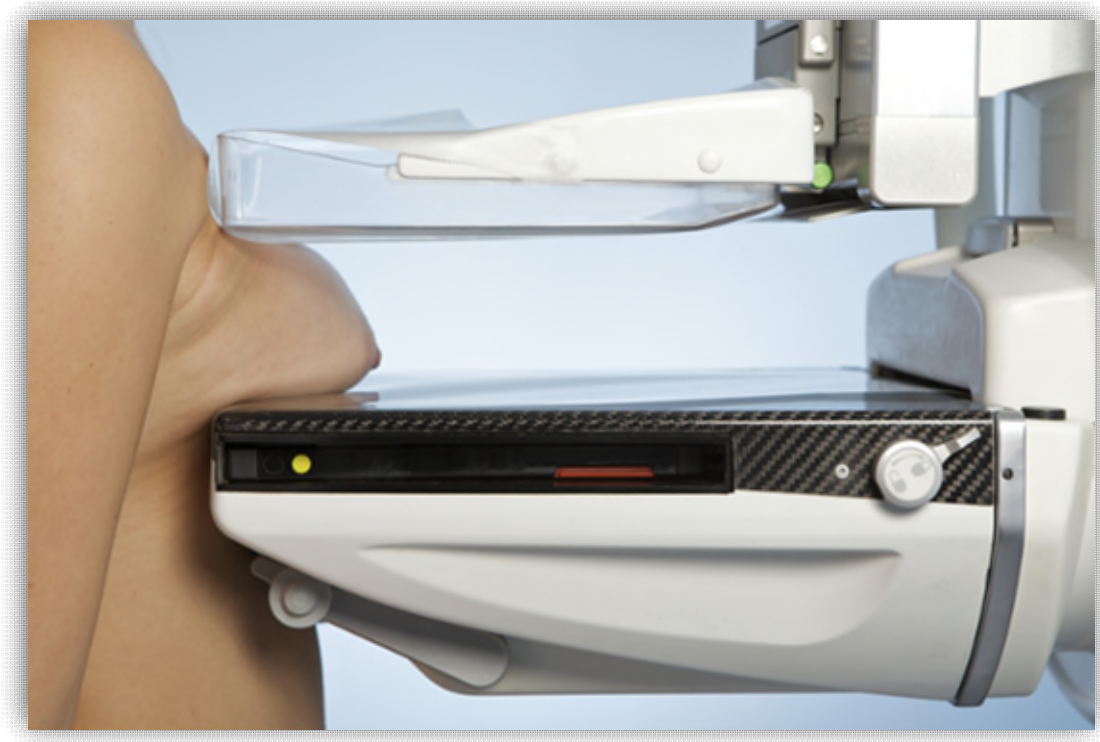
## Taking the X-Ray Picture

The person taking the pictures will put your breast on a flat plastic shelf.

Another shelf will slowly come down and press on your breast.

You will feel pressure and it may hurt, but it will be over quickly.

(Name of caregiver) will be in the room with you, so you won't be alone.



# Hold Your Breath

The person helping you will ask you to hold your breath for just a short time. While you are holding your breath, she will take the picture.

Let's practice holding our breath.



**Note to Caregiver:** Practice holding your breath with the individual. Encourage the individual to hold her breath with you when the time comes during the exam.

# You're Doing Great So Far!

The shelf that is pressing on your breast will rise and you will not feel the pressure anymore.

See? It's that simple!

I know you can do it! You always do a great job!



**Note to Caregiver:** Offer the individual praise and encouragement as you continue to explain the following steps.

## Now for the Other Side

Now, the person helping you will do the same things for pictures of your other breast. Do you remember the steps?

Let's review them together, okay?



**Note to Caregiver:** Read over the procedure again; Include practice holding a breath.

# Great Job! I Know You Can Do It!!

When all the pictures have been taken, you will be able to go back to the room where your clothes are. You will take off the hospital gown and get dressed again.

Great job!

I know you can do this – you're a great person and everyone enjoys helping you when you go to your appointments!



**Note to Caregiver:** This is a good place to determine how well the person understands what was presented. Aske some very brief questions such as, "Do you know what will happen when you go to have these special pictures done?" Revisit the story as often as needed to ensure the person understands and is prepared when the day of the test arrives.

## References

- Radiological Society of North America (RSNA) and American College of Radiology. (2021, March 23). *Mammography*. Retrieved August 3, 2022, from <https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?pg=mammo>



For additional information regarding this guide or any of our physical or behavioral health trainings, contact:

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