

Mammograms Shouldn't Revolve Around COVID-19 Vaccinations



The Society of Breast Imaging (SBI) now recommends that women should not delay mammograms due to COVID-19 vaccinations. Lymph node swelling caused by vaccination presented a concern for false positives because this is a signal also associated with cancer. Women were advised in 2021 to delay mammograms to avoid false-positive results and unnecessary follow-ups. It was later determined that lymph node swellings might persist up to 43 weeks.

This decision follows a recent retrospective NYU study that examined the value of the delay when weighed against the danger of delayed screening. This study examined outcomes in women who received a COVID-19 vaccine and had breast imaging between 30 December 2020 and 12 April 2021 at 17 sites. Follow-up exams were recorded through 10 December 2021.

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About 46% and 38% of those receiving Moderna and Pfizer vaccines had swollen lymph nodes which was most common after 14 days after the first vaccine dose but could be seen in some cases after 71 days after the second dose.

The study authors concluded that 'there should be no delay in screening mammograms due to recent vaccination and there is variable time to resolution of reactive lymphadenopathy. Lymphadenopathy should be interpreted in the context of patient risk factors with vigilance in patients with concurrent suspicious mammographic findings in the ipsilateral breast.'

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Source: [SBI, Radiology](#)

Published on : Wed, 16 Mar 2022