

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's Health and Wellness Program, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I'm Katie Johnson, your host and my guest today is Kayla Olson. She is a radiologic technologist who's certified in mammograms, works in our radiology department here at Lake Region Healthcare, and is there to talk more about mammograms for October breast cancer awareness month. Good morning, Kayla.

Kayla Olson: Good morning.

Katie Johnson: So, breast cancer is the second most common kind of cancer in women. About one in eight women born in the US today will get cancer, at some point. That's a pretty staggering number, but the good news is that most women can survive breast cancer if it is found and treated early. That's why I wanted to talk about mammograms today. It's the screen test for breast cancer that can help find breast cancer earlier, when it's easier to treat, and bringing awareness to that issue with someone who works with this on a daily bases is our approach today. Let's start with, what is a mammogram?

Kayla Olson: A mammogram is an x-ray exam of the breast, used to detect and diagnose breast disease.

Katie Johnson: There are varying recommendations about when women should have either their first mammogram or their regular follow-up mammograms. The bottom line is, every woman should have one at some point. Is that accurate?

Kayla Olson: Yes. The American Cancer Society recommends that all women have a baseline screening between age 35 and 40. And then, beginning at age 40, they should start annual screenings.

Katie Johnson: Do women reach an age where they don't need mammograms anymore?

Kayla Olson: We tell you to talk to your physician about that.

Katie Johnson: That's always a good idea. Your physician is going to know your personal history better, and all those factors that should go into any medical decision, really, being made based on your individual needs.

Kayla Olson: Right.

Katie Johnson: Lake Region Healthcare started offering 3D mammograms in the last year or so. I've heard that that process is a little bit different than from the previous 2D mammogram. Tell us what it's like. Walk us through what getting a 3D mammogram is like.

Kayla Olson: Right. Patients usually come in for their 3D mammogram thinking the procedure is completely different. Really, that's actually not the case. The positioning for a

3D mammogram is the same as a 2D mammogram. We take two images of each breast. When the technologist makes the exposure, the machine makes a sweeping arch over the breast, lastly on a few seconds more than a traditional scan, which results in a series of images that gives more detail to the picture and providing more clarity for the radiologist.

Katie Johnson: I remember when we first we got the 3D machine, we talked with some of our radiologist about what that picture looks like and how it just adds so many layers to their ability to see more intricately what is actually in the picture.

Kayla Olson: Right, so it's taking all these images and it's complying it on top of each other. You're able to take tissue away and look underneath tissue, which takes away false callbacks because of say, superimposed tissue.

Katie Johnson: Oh, and false callbacks are never what a woman wants to hear, right?

Kayla Olson: Right, exactly.

Katie Johnson: Right. Once you have a mammogram, how long does it typically take to get results?

Kayla Olson: Your provider usually contacts you within three to four business days. And then, the radiology department actually sends you a letter in the mail.

Katie Johnson: So, you'll probably get two pieces of follow-up. If you have the electronic portal, your health records electronically, will you also receive notification there?

Kayla Olson: You should, yep. It should be released by your physician.

Katie Johnson: Perfect. We hear a lot of excuses, I think about why women don't get mammograms, as recommended. What are the most common reasons you hear, and what's your response to them?

Kayla Olson: The number one reason is people are scared that the examine is going to hurt. Unfortunately, we get a lot of horror stories coming from patients, but I always say, "You know, it's not as bad as you think it's going to be, so don't be afraid." The procedure's quick. It's about 15 minutes. Discomfort is minimal for most women. I also hear that people are nervous about the results or nervous to get the results. It's important to remember early detection is key, which is why we perform mammograms.

Katie Johnson: Exactly. When you talk about it's quick, being you know, 15 minutes. The pain is not for 15 minutes, even. I mean, that's in and out the door. The pain is literally for seconds. I agree it's not as bad as you make it out to be in your mind.

Kayla Olson: Right. You're only compressed, I'd say, just a couple of seconds. Once the tech makes the exposure, it automatically releases.

Katie Johnson: Right. Maybe some of those horror stories are from our tendency to exaggerate things like this.

Kayla Olson: Right, exactly because nobody likes to come in for a mammogram.

Katie Johnson: Exactly. Let's talk a little bit about other prevention techniques, self-examines are one important role in early detection in a woman's proactive management of their health. Do you have some recommended resources for what to look for? How often we should be conducting those as women?

Kayla Olson: Right. We actually do encourage your patient to talk to the primary provider about self-exams. They could ask them to do a demonstration. They learn the techniques. They should ask what to look for. They could also go on the internet and go to breastcancer.org. They have some good instructions there or stop by radiology. We have a brochure.

Katie Johnson: Perfect. Cost of insurance coverage are something that I hear about too. Sometimes, as a barrier or sometimes as a concern that people have. I understand it's important to check with your insurance provider about the option of whether or not they cover 3D mammograms. If they don't, does the patient have the option to do a 2D instead, or how does that work?

Kayla Olson: Yes, we do offer 2D mammograms in place of 3D for all patients. Most carriers now cover the 3D portion of the screening mammogram. However, we always recommend patients verify coverage for the 3D portion with the insurance carrier before the appointment, as coverage may vary, and may be subject to co-insurance or deductibles.

Katie Johnson: Right. Beforehand is always good, better than having the surprise afterward and being upset with coverage not being there that you expected to be there. Like you said, most of them are covering it now, but good to double check, and good to know that you have the 2D option if you don't want to pay anything that might not be covered. The radiology department always does some fun giveaways during October from my recollection. Are you doing some things to kind of incent women during October to come in and have their mammograms?

Kayla Olson: Yep. We have a fun little gift bag that we will do a drawing at the end of the month for. Each patient that comes in during October, has the option to put their name in for that drawing. And then, each patient that comes in during the month of October, we actually have just a few little goodies that they can choose from to take home that day.

Katie Johnson: Well, very fun. So, women should get their appointment. I kind of skipped over that question earlier. I meant to ask if you do your self-exam and find something suspicious, what's the best way to get scheduled for a mammogram? Do they have to do that through their primary doctor? Can they make appointments directly? What do you recommend there?

Kayla Olson: Yep. A doctors order is required for a mammogram, so if they have any concerns, contact the provider and then inform them of that, and then they'll get you in the right direction.

Katie Johnson: They're always great about working with you to schedule a time that will work for you. As I said, we're really encouraging, especially people who haven't had one regularly, to take advantage of October, as breast cancer awareness month. All the pink that you see around, you know, should be plenty of a reminder for you to call in, to make that appointment and also to do those regular self-exams. Kayla, anything else you'd like our listeners to know about mammograms and early detection?

Kayla Olson: I just want them to know that an annual mammogram can detect cancer early when it's most treatable. In fact, mammograms can show changes in the breast up to two years before a patient or a physician can feel them. Mammograms can also prevent the need for extensive treatment for advanced cancers.

Katie Johnson: All worthy reasons and I would add to that, that I want our listeners to know that our staff, like you, are absolutely fantastic at their job.

Kayla Olson: Thank you.

Katie Johnson: And make it easier and less scary to do, so don't let that be a barrier. Thanks for what you do. Thanks for taking the time to share your knowledge with us and encourage our listeners to get their mammograms and get proactive about their breast health during breast cancer awareness month.

Kayla Olson: Thank you.

Katie Johnson: Kayla Olson, radiologic technologist, certified in mammograms, my guest this morning on Apple a Day, for breast cancer awareness month. Kayla and Katie, do remind you there is so much to do here, stay healthy for it. Have a great day.