

# Breast Cancer Screening

## Quick Reference Guide

**Purpose:** This resource provides health care professionals with essential guidelines for making breast cancer screenings accessible for people with disabilities.

### Key Clinical Decisions

**DO:**

- **Assess each patient individually** rather than making assumptions based on disability type
- **Ask patients about previous screening experiences** and accommodation needs before the screening
- **Coordinate with imaging centers** that have accessible equipment and experience with disabilities
- **Consider alternative screening options** (breast MRI, ultrasound, clinical breast exam) when mammography is not feasible despite accommodations

**DO NOT:**

- **Do not assume** patients cannot undergo mammography or lack capacity for informed consent
- **Do not focus solely on the disability** and miss screening opportunities
- **Do not proceed without accommodations** when standard positioning fails
- **Do not wait for patients to request accommodations** instead of proactively offering support

### Alternative Screening Options

- **Breast MRI:** Consider when positioning challenges persist despite accommodations (requires prone positioning for 30–45 minutes, accessible tables that lower to 17–19 inches, transfer assistance).
- **Breast ultrasound:** More positioning options, portable equipment (note: higher false positive rates than mammography).
- **Clinical breast exam:** Essential when imaging is not feasible; may require increased frequency when serving as primary screening method.
- **Patient education:** Teach breast self-exam techniques and importance of breast awareness regardless of screening method used.



## Key Risk Factors for People with Disabilities

- **Similar or increased breast cancer risk but receive screening at lower rates** (61.2%–67.5% versus 72.8% for those without disabilities).
- **Unaddressed barriers can lead to later-stage diagnosis and worse outcomes.**

Clinical Decision Point	Key Accommodations
<b>Mobility Disabilities</b>	
When patient uses wheelchair, cannot stand for mammogram, has difficulty with arm positioning, spasticity, limited range of motion, or needs transfer assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessible mammography equipment (28-inch-knee/toe clearance, adjustable height 26–42 inches)</li><li>• Positioning supports (pillows, wedges, support bars)</li><li>• Extended appointment times</li><li>• Alternative screening methods (breast MRI with transfer assistance, ultrasound)</li></ul>
<b>Vision Disabilities</b>	
When patient cannot see written materials or standard visual cues, needs spatial orientation support, requires tactile communication, or requests accessible formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comprehensive verbal descriptions of procedure and equipment</li><li>• Tactile guidance and orientation with permission</li><li>• Braille/large-print materials</li><li>• Audio materials</li><li>• Describe sensations before touching or repositioning</li></ul>
<b>Hearing Disabilities</b>	
When patient cannot hear verbal instructions, uses American Sign Language (ASL), needs communication supports, or requests auxiliary aids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Qualified sign language interpreters in person or Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)</li><li>• Clear visual communication and eye contact with patient</li><li>• Written materials and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) service</li><li>• Ensure interpreter has clear line of sight</li><li>• Alternative breathing cue systems (e.g., visual cards)</li></ul>
<b>Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities</b>	
When patient needs environmental modifications, uses assistive technology for communication, has difficulty understanding or requires caregiver support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plain language explanations (sentences under 10 words)</li><li>• Step-by-step narration of each action</li><li>• Visual supports and social stories</li><li>• Sensory accommodations (low lights, soft music)</li><li>• Extended time and preparatory visits</li><li>• Support person present, if requested</li></ul>