

Creating an Enabling Environment in Mammography

Tips for Mammography Staff on How to Work with Women with Disabilities

In General...

- Treat women with disabilities with dignity and respect, the same as patients without disabilities.
- Use “people first” language. For example, refer to patients using phrases such as “a person who uses a wheelchair” or “a woman with multiple sclerosis”.
- Remember that women with disabilities are individuals with the same variety of attitudes, interests, personalities, and moods as other people. Don’t make assumptions about what the patient is thinking or feeling during the appointment, or her quality of life in general.
- Follow these basics to improve the overall patient experience:
 - T** – Take the time to ask, “May I assist you?” or “How can I help?”
 - A** – Ask, don’t assume. Never assist unless asked.
 - L** – Listen attentively, and speak directly to the person with a disability.
 - K** – Know the accommodations and accessible services available at the hospital.

When Scheduling...

- Ask the patient if she needs assistance or any disability accommodations, i.e. extra time, space, or sign language.
- If the patient is a wheelchair user:
 - Ask if she will be travelling via Wheeltrans
 - Ask if the wheelchair has arms that can be removed
- Advise the patient to bring attendant care and toileting supplies with her to the appointment, as these are not available at the hospital.
- Let the patient know that a volunteer or staff member may be available to help her fill out forms and change into a gown, if needed.
- Refer the patient to information about hospital accessibility on the Mount Sinai Hospital website.
- When possible, provide a longer appointment time, or book the patient when the clinic will be less busy and two technologists will be available to work with her.

At the Appointment...

- Speak clearly and directly to the patient. Greet any support person with the patient (interpreter, attendant, or companion).
- If the patient has arrived by Wheeltrans, ask what time the patient needs to meet her ride and communicate this to other staff members.
- If asked about pain, assure the patient that women have different experiences based on their own bodies, any discomfort experienced will be temporary, and the technician will work with her to make the mammogram as comfortable as possible.
- Advise the patient that she can change into a gown in the mammogram room with the assistance of a technologist, if needed.

During the Mammogram...

- Let the patient know what to expect during the procedure.
- When taking information and giving instructions, it’s helpful to be at eye level whenever possible.
- Give clear instructions and collaborate. Ask the patient what works best for her. The patient is an expert on her own body and the best resource for information on how to help with positioning.
- If the patient requires additional procedures, ask if she would prefer to have the procedures that day or would like to schedule a separate appointment.