

Creating an Enabling Environment in Mammography

General Disability Etiquette for Mammography Staff

Women with disabilities live busy, fulfilling lives. They value their health and want to preserve their well-being. They want access to tests that will prolong their lives, and do a lot of work to arrange and attend cancer screening. Women with disabilities, like all women, have unique bodily experiences and a range of needs and concerns that are specific to their life circumstances. Like all women, they want healthcare providers to work with them to get the best images possible. Here are some ways you can create an enabling environment in mammography for women with disabilities and promote a positive experience for all patients. Remember that positive experiences promote return screening!

Treat all patients and their support people with dignity and respect. Treat women with disabilities the same as you treat patients without disabilities. No two bodies are the same. All women want to be treated as capable, equal partners in their healthcare.

Women with disabilities are individuals and experts about their own bodies. They have the same variety of attitudes, interests, moods, and personalities as other people. They have unique needs, preferences, and bodily knowledge. Respect women's differences, and be sensitive to their physical and emotional vulnerability during healthcare procedures. Each patient can advise you about her what works best for her.

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", instead of using terms like "handicapped".

Direct your communication to the patient with a disability unless she directs you to do otherwise, even if she is accompanied by an interpreter, attendant, or companion.

Offer assistance to women with disabilities by asking, "how can I help?" Wait for a response and then follow her instructions. Respect her decision to say no.

Be aware of the extra time it may take for some women with disabilities to get things done or said. Let her set the pace when walking or talking.

Some women with disabilities may have experienced past trauma with healthcare providers and the healthcare system. It's important to check in with patients periodically to see how they are doing. Treating all patients with sensitivity and compassion will lessen their anxiety.

A best practice is to ask if you are unsure about something. Remember that you and the patient are working together.

Know the accessible services and accommodations that are available at your hospital, such as accessible washrooms and Wheeltrans pick up locations.