**Premedication With Lidocaine Gel May Decrease Discomfort During Mammography**

by Pamela Jones, MA

Mammograms are still the best screening tool for breast cancer. The specialized x-ray improves the ability of specialists to find small tumors in breast tissue. Small cancerous tumors have the most treatment options and highest cure rates. Having a mammogram does require compressing the breast, and some women may find this very uncomfortable. There are concerns that this discomfort discourages women from seeking the important screening.

Researchers at St. Luke’s Mountain State Tumor Institute examined the ability of a lidocaine gel to decrease discomfort during a mammography. The study, published in *Radiology*, found that the gel was effective.

**About the Study**

The randomized trial assessed 418 women who expected high level of discomfort during their mammography. The women were assigned to have standard care with acetaminophen or ibuprofen or to a group that received an application of 4% lidocaine gel. Both treatments were administered in the clinic prior to the mammogram. The women were also asked if discomfort had delayed their mammogram or if it is likely to affect their decision to come back for the next mammogram.

The lidocaine group reported statistically lower levels of discomfort. The study also found that discomfort decreased the likelihood of future mammograms.

**How Does This Affect You?**

The study found that addressing this issue was not only important for comfort but also in encouraging future screenings. Removing barriers such as discomfort may allow more women to get screened.

The American Cancer Society recommends women have mammograms every year starting at age 40. Talk to your doctor about screening options and about ways to relieve discomfort from this procedure.

**RESOURCES:**

American Cancer Society  

National Cancer Institute  

**REFERENCES:**


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