



● HEALTHY

## Breast Defense

So the pain you endure during a mammogram is a pittance when compared to the pain of, say, a mastectomy. It's pain nonetheless—and it often gets in the way of women keeping up with their annual mammograms, still the most effective way of finding breast cancer in its earliest and most treatable stages, says Alicia Starr, MD, director of the Women's Imaging Center at Baylor Regional Medical Center in Plano, Texas. Here, Dr. Starr's easy Rx for downgrading the ouch:

**SKIP THE STARBUCKS.** "Caffeine can lead to breast tenderness and can also cause the breasts to become harder, lumpier, and very painful on their own," says Dr. Starr. If you can't make it through the day without a cup of coffee, tea, or even a diet drink, schedule your mammogram for first thing in the morning.

**SKIP THE SECRET, TOO.** Deodorant, talcum powder, perfumes, and oils may leave a residue that can obscure the mammogram and interfere with the results, necessitating another scan—not exactly what you want if you're trying to minimize your pain.

**PLAN AROUND YOUR PERIOD.** Breasts are less tender at the end of your menstrual cycle; they're most tender right before it begins.

**POP A PILL.** "Take a pain reliever like acetaminophen an hour before the exam," says Dr. Starr. "It will cut down on your pain." Just check the label to make sure the pain reliever doesn't contain caffeine.