Patient thinks she is at high risk for breast cancer

Start

My patient received the new breast density letter. She is concerned because she now thinks she is at high risk for breast cancer.

Reassure the patient that breast density alone has only a small impact on breast cancer risk.

She wants to know specifically how it changes her risk.

Look up her mammogram report (different from the patient letter).

1. If the report states her density is heterogeneously dense, this is associated with minimal risk above average (RR=1.2 compared to average breast density).
2. If her density is extremely dense (also sometimes called simply dense), this factor doubles her risk of breast cancer compared to average density, similar to the risk associated with a family history of breast cancer in a mother, sister or daughter. For example, having extremely dense tissue on its own raises the 10-year risk of breast cancer in the average 50-year-old woman from 1 in 42 to 1 in 21.

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