Breast screening

What you need to know
This resource is available in Urdu, Chinese and Polish, and in an Easy Read format. NHS Health Scotland is happy to consider requests for other languages and formats. Please contact 0131 536 5500 or email nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net
What is breast screening?

Breast screening is designed to find breast cancers before they can be seen or felt.

Making a decision to attend screening is a personal choice. If you are trying to decide whether to go for breast screening, you may find it helpful to review the information in this booklet, including:

- benefits and disadvantages, page 3
- what happens during breast screening, page 6
- helpful statistics, page 12.

You may also find it helpful to:

- visit [www.nhsinform.co.uk/screening/breast](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/screening/breast)
- contact the NHS inform helpline on 0800 22 44 88 (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88; the helpline also provides an interpreting service)
- talk to your friends and family who have already attended.

All women aged between 50 and 70 are invited to breast screening
Who is offered breast screening in Scotland and why?

Approximately every three years, NHSScotland invites all women aged between 50 and 70 for breast screening.

Women aged between 50 and 70

Evidence tells us that the risk of developing breast cancer increases with age and that finding breast cancer is most effective using breast X-rays (mammograms) in women who have reached menopause.

Women over the age of 70

You are still welcome to come for screening every three years, although you will not automatically be invited. To make an appointment you can phone your local screening centre (see page 16 for details). You remain at increasing risk of developing breast cancer and should regularly check your breasts for changes and contact your GP if you are concerned.

All women, at any age, should regularly check their breasts for any changes. This includes those under the age of 50 and even those who take part in the screening programme. See pages 10 and 11 for helpful information on how to check yourself.
What are the benefits of breast screening?

- Screening can find breast cancer before any symptoms become noticeable.
- The earlier breast cancer is found, the better your chance of surviving it.
- If breast cancer is found early you are less likely to need a mastectomy (your breast removed) or chemotherapy (anti-cancer drug treatment).

What are the disadvantages of being screened?

- Mammograms do not find all cancers so sometimes they look normal even if cancer is there. This is why it’s important to keep regularly checking your breasts for any changes in between screening.
- The breast screening process can cause some embarrassment, anxiety and physical discomfort.
- Having a mammogram means your breasts are exposed to a small amount of radiation.
How will I know when to go?

When you get your appointment will depend on which GP practice you are registered with, which may mean that you are invited at different times to other women your age. You should get your first invitation before your 53rd birthday. If you haven’t, please contact your local screening centre (see page 16 for details).

Does screening prevent breast cancer?

No. Screening can detect cancer at an early stage, before it can be seen or felt, but it can only find cancer if it is already there.
Where do I go for breast screening?

Depending on where you live, you will be invited to either a mobile screening unit or one of the six screening centres in Scotland. The numbers for the Scottish screening centres can be found on page 16 of this leaflet.

Not every breast cancer is found during breast screening because some cancers don’t show up at all on mammograms. A small number of breast cancers may not be seen on the mammograms by the people reading them.
What happens during breast screening?

Your appointment will usually take no more than half an hour and the mammogram itself only takes a few minutes.

This stage of the breast screening process is carried out by female staff only (mammographers). The mammographer will ask you a few questions and will explain what will happen. You can ask your mammographer questions at any time.

You will be asked to undress from the waist up. Therefore, you may find it more helpful to wear trousers or a skirt. Your privacy will be respected at all times and you can cover up with your own top when you aren’t having the mammogram itself.

Some women find the test uncomfortable or embarrassing, but remember that the mammographer is a health professional who carries out many mammograms every day. The mammogram itself only takes a few minutes and could save your life.
What does a mammogram feel like?

Your mammographer will position one breast at a time between two special plates on the mammogram machine and will take two pictures of each breast. Your breast needs to be pressed firmly between the plates for a few seconds so that the mammographer can take a good image. You will have to stay as still as possible for a few seconds while the images are taken. You cannot feel the X-ray itself. Remember, you are in control and can say ‘stop’ at any time if you feel too uncomfortable.
When do I get the results?

Your results letter will be sent to your home address within three weeks. Your GP will also be sent a copy of your results. If your results do not arrive within three weeks please contact the screening centre that you attended.

What mammogram results might I get?

You will receive one of three results letters. The majority of women will receive a letter saying that their mammograms are clear and that they will be invited for breast screening again in three years time. This means your mammogram shows no sign of cancer. However, you may still develop breast cancer so you should stay ‘breast aware’ (see pages 10 and 11).

A very small number of women will be asked for a ‘technical recall’. This means your mammogram is not of adequate quality, which can occur if not all the breast tissue was imaged or the breast tissue was moved during the mammogram. This means you will be asked to return to the screening centre for a repeat mammogram.

Around 1 in 20 women will be invited to the second stage of screening to attend an appointment for further tests. This means your mammogram may be showing an area the doctors would like to image more clearly.
If you are invited back to the second stage of screening because further tests are required you may receive a clinical breast examination, more mammograms and/or an ultrasound scan. Some women will also need a biopsy. A biopsy is when a small sample of tissue is removed (you will be offered a local anaesthetic for this). We carry out these tests to find out whether you have breast cancer.

**What if further tests find breast cancer?**

If you are told that you have breast cancer you will be cared for by a specialist breast cancer team. Your treatment will be carefully planned by your breast cancer team and, if there are choices about treatment, you will receive information and support to help you decide what is right for you.

**What if further tests find DCIS?**

Breast screening can find a non-invasive breast cancer called ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS). This is an early form of breast cancer which starts in the milk duct. Although it isn’t life threatening it can increase your chances of developing invasive breast cancer within 5 to 10 years of being diagnosed with DCIS. It is not known which forms of DCIS will progress, so all women are offered treatment options. You can discuss your treatment options with your breast cancer team to help you decide what is right for you.

Remember that most, but not all, cancers found at breast screening can be treated successfully
Be breast aware

Being breast aware is about getting to know your own body so that you can spot any changes to your breasts early on. The most important things you need to know about breast awareness are what is normal for you and that you should tell your GP about any changes as soon as you spot them.

Remember you can develop breast cancer at any time. This includes the time in between breast screening appointments.

DON’T GET SCARED, GET CHECKED
Changes in your breasts (including the area up to your armpit) may be harmless, but you should get them checked straight away. You need to look out for:

- a lump, area of thickened tissue or bumps in either breast
- a change in the size or shape of one or both breasts
- a lump or swelling in either of your armpits
- skin that appears like orange peel
- crusting on or around the nipple
- a leaking nipple which may or may not be streaked with blood
- dimples or skin that’s become drawn in
- a nipple that’s become turned in.

For more information, visit NHS inform for information on Detect Cancer Early.
Some statistics you might find helpful

These numbers are the most up-to-date statistics but may change over time:

- Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women.
- About 1,100 women die of breast cancer each year in Scotland.
- About 8 out of 1,000 women screened will be found to have breast cancer. Of these, 2 will be told they have an early form of breast cancer called ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS).
- There are around 4,500 new breast cancer cases a year in Scotland.
- 8 out of 10 breast cancers are found in women aged 50 and over.
- For every 400 women screened regularly for 10 years, one less woman will die from breast cancer. This means around 130 women are prevented from dying from breast cancer each year in Scotland.
- For every 14,000 women screened regularly for 10 years, one woman may develop breast cancer because of the radiation from the mammograms.
- Men can also get breast cancer and there are around 23 new male breast cancer cases a year in Scotland.

For more information, visit www.nhsinform.co.uk/screening/breast
What happens to my mammograms after screening?

Screening information is treated in the strictest confidence and is used to ensure that the breast screening service meets agreed standards, as well as to identify areas for improvement. Only authorised staff and appropriate healthcare professionals have access to this information.

If you need more information about NHS record-keeping, you can phone the NHS inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88** (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88). The helpline also provides an interpreting service.

More information and support

NHS inform Screening Scotland web pages provide further information about breast screening in Scotland: [www.nhsinform.co.uk/screening/breast](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/screening/breast)

NHS inform Detect Cancer Early web pages provide support and advice about spotting the signs and symptoms of cancer, including breast cancer, as early as possible: [www.nhsinform.co.uk/cancer/scotland/dce](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/cancer/scotland/dce)

For information regarding your health rights and confidentiality, visit [www.hris.org.uk](http://www.hris.org.uk)
What happens if...

...I have not accepted previous invitations for breast screening, can I still attend?
Yes. Although you get the best out of screening by attending every time you are invited, you can attend even if you have not been before.

...I have had mammograms elsewhere?
You can still attend, if the mammograms were taken more than six months ago. If you have had mammograms taken more recently, please contact the screening centre to discuss whether you need to attend.

...I have previously had breast cancer?
Please contact your screening centre to discuss your appointment.

...I need an interpreter at my appointment?
If you need the assistance of an interpreter, please contact your local screening centre to let us know when you receive your appointment letter so that arrangements can be made.

...I need to claim travel expenses?
If you are on income support, you can reclaim your expenses. For more information please contact the NHS inform helpline on 0800 22 44 88 (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88). The helpline also provides an interpreting service.
...I would like to be accompanied for screening?

Your breast screening examination will be carried out by a female mammographer. You are welcome to bring someone along with you if it would be helpful, but please note that men are not allowed to enter the mobile units. Please contact the screening centre before your appointment if you would like to bring someone, or if you would rather reschedule your appointment.

...I have access needs?

Please contact the centre, even if you have attended in the past. This will allow us to arrange a suitable appointment for you.

...I have implants, can I still go for screening?

Yes. Please contact the centre and a leaflet with further information will be sent to you. If your appointment has been made for a mobile screening unit, it may need to be changed to a screening centre where specialised equipment is available.
Scottish Breast Screening Centres

North of Scotland (Inverness)
Tel: 01463 705416

North East of Scotland (Aberdeen)
Tel: 01224 550570

West of Scotland (Glasgow)
Tel: 0141 572 5800
Text phone: 0141 572 5858

South West of Scotland (Irvine)
Tel: 01294 323505 or 323506 or 323507

East of Scotland (Dundee)
Tel: 01382 425646

South East of Scotland (Edinburgh)
Tel: 0131 537 7400

The Scottish Breast Screening Programme is regularly reviewed to make sure we offer the best possible service to you. If you have a complaint, or want to make a comment or suggestion about the content of this information leaflet, please contact Carol Colquhoun (National Coordinator of Screening Programmes, National Services Division) by email: NSS.nsd-enquiries@nhs.net
This publication is available online at
www.healthscotland.com or telephone
0131 536 5500.

Traditional Chinese
您也可以登入 www.healthscotland.com
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Polish
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Urdu
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