

Having a mammogram

www.timetoscreen.nz



BreastScreen
Aotearoa

Thank you for taking part in the BreastScreen Aotearoa programme. This information will help you prepare for your mammogram.

A mammogram is an x-ray that takes pictures showing the inside of your breast. The pictures are then given to two specialist doctors to check for signs of breast cancer.

Your mammogram pictures are not checked for other health problems, such as problems with breast implants. If you notice any changes to your breasts please see your doctor straight away as these need to be investigated.

BreastScreen Aotearoa will send you an appointment for a mammogram when you first enrol and then every two years. Please call us on 0800 270 200 if you have any questions.

Your mammogram is free.

Finding the BreastScreen Aotearoa clinics and mobile units

You can have a breast screening mammogram at a clinic or in a BreastScreen Aotearoa mobile unit. Most of the clinics and mobile units are wheelchair accessible. You can ring 0800 270 200 to find the clinic or mobile unit closest to you or to change where you have your mammogram. To see the mobile unit schedule online go to **<http://www.timetoscreen.nz/breast-screening/having-a-mammogram/find-clinic/>**



What do I do now?

- Once you get an appointment letter, please ring 0800 270 200 to confirm or change your appointment time.
- You can also ring us to change where you have your mammogram if you want to go to another clinic or mobile unit.
- Fill out the *Client Details Form* if it is sent to you and bring it to your appointment.
- Read the *Screening for breast cancer* pamphlet if you haven't already.

When you ring, please tell us if you:

- have had a mammogram before
- need wheelchair access
- need an interpreter
- have problems moving your shoulder or arm
- have breast implants
- have a cardiac device such as a pacemaker.

We may need to change your appointment or give you a longer appointment.

On the day of your mammogram

- Do not use deodorant, talcum powder, moisturiser, sunscreen, perfume or creams on your breasts or armpits. These things make it harder to see cancers on the x-ray.
- If you have used something on your skin, PLEASE tell the radiographer (who takes the mammogram) and they will give you a cloth to wipe it away.
- You will be asked to undress from the waist up. Wear tops that are easy to take off, such as a shirt or jersey.
- You will be asked to remove jewellery and taonga so you may prefer not to wear these.
- Bring your *Client Details Form* if you have one.
- Bring your reading glasses in case you need them.
- Tell the radiographer if you have breast implants or are on hormone replacement therapy.
- Tell the radiographer if you have a cardiac device such as a pacemaker.

Your appointment should take 20–30 minutes.

You may bring a support person or member of your family with you if you would like someone with you before and after your mammogram. It is not recommended that extra people are in the room during your mammogram.

What happens when you arrive?

The receptionist will ask your name and details when you arrive. You will be asked to read and sign a form to agree to have a mammogram.

Your name will be called and you will be offered a cape or gown and shown to a private area to undress from the waist up.

You will then go into the area with the mammogram machine (the x-ray machine) and the radiographer who takes the mammogram. All of the radiographers are women. If you have any questions or concerns, talk to the radiographer.

What happens during a mammogram?

The radiographer will have you stand close to the mammogram machine and pull back your cape or gown. The radiographer will put one of your breasts between two plates on the machine and will move your breast around until it is in the right place. The radiographer will bring the plates together to press your breast firmly for up to a minute while they take an x-ray.



Pressing your breast flat is done to:

- make your breast thin to help the x-ray show very small details
- keep the breast still to give a clear x-ray image of the inside of your breast
- reduce the radiation dose.



The radiographer will try to make you comfortable but you might find having your breast pressed firmly uncomfortable. It does not harm your breasts. If you find it painful it is important to tell the radiographer so they can make you more comfortable. You also have the right to ask for the mammogram to be stopped.



You will be asked to stand very still for up to a minute while the radiographer takes at least two x-ray pictures of your breast.

A mammogram can x-ray breasts of all sizes.

It can be more difficult

to get good x-ray pictures of large breasts and the radiographer may need to re-position your breast more often and take more pictures.

The radiographer will check that your x-ray pictures are good enough to send to a radiologist (a specialist doctor). This means the position of the breast is correct and the picture is not blurry. The radiographer is not checking for cancer, this can only be done by a radiologist.

Once the radiographer has good x-rays, they will let you know your mammogram is finished and you can get dressed and leave.

Other things to know

Family history

Women who have a family history of breast cancer have a slightly greater chance of developing the disease. However, most of these women do not develop breast cancer. In fact, the majority of women who get breast cancer will have no family history of the disease. This is why it is important for all women to be aware of any changes to their breasts and to have regular mammograms.

Hormone Replacement Therapy

If you are taking hormone replacement therapy, it can make it harder for an x-ray to show what is happening inside your breast. This makes it more likely that breast cancers are not able to be seen in the x-rays.

Hormone replacement therapy can also double the risk of breast cancer if you are on it for more than five years.

Breast implants

There is a very small risk a breast implant could be damaged during a mammogram. Please tell the radiographer if you have breast implants before your mammogram.

More information is available in the booklet *More about breast screening and BreastScreen Aotearoa*, code HE10107 available at www.healthed.govt.nz or by phoning BreastScreen Aotearoa on 0800 270 200.

FREEPHONE

0800 270 200

When do I get my results?

At least two specialist doctors will look at the x-ray pictures from your mammogram to check for signs of cancer. BreastScreen Aotearoa will send you a letter with your results within two to three weeks. Your results will also be sent to your doctor unless you tell us not to. This helps your doctor stay up to date with your health. Please call us on 0800 270 200 if your results do not arrive.

A small number of women will be asked to come back for another mammogram because their pictures are not clear enough.



Your information

Your records and mammograms are stored securely and confidentially by BreastScreen Aotearoa under the Health Information Privacy Code. To help monitor the quality of the breast screening programme, BreastScreen Aotearoa may collect:

- information about the treatment you have received and may need in the future
- your clinical information, mammograms and reports.

By collecting this information, your mammograms will be able to be checked more accurately.

Information from the breast screening programme can be collected by the Ministry of Health or its agents using your National Health Index Number.

Your rights

At BreastScreen Aotearoa clinics and mobile units your rights are protected by the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights.

During breast screening and when talking to BreastScreen Aotearoa you have these rights:

- 1 The right to be treated with respect.
- 2 The right to be treated fairly.
- 3 The right to dignity and independence.
- 4 The right to support and care that suits you.
- 5 The right to be told things in a way you understand.
- 6 The right to be told about your health.
- 7 The right to make choices about your care and support.
- 8 The right to have a support person or people with you.
- 9 The right to decide if you want to be part of training, teaching or research.
- 10 The right to make a complaint.

You can ask more information about your rights when you visit a BreastScreen Aotearoa clinic or mobile unit. You can also read more about your rights at www.hdc.org.nz

The Health Information Privacy Code protects your privacy. You can read about the code at www.privacy.org.nz

To find out how to make a complaint you can call BreastScreen Aotearoa on 0800 270 200 or you can contact an advocate from the Office of the Health and Disability Commission for help on 0800 11 22 33.

Quality of BreastScreen Aotearoa services

All BreastScreen Aotearoa facilities have to meet national quality standards, which are independently checked.

This resource is available from www.healthed.govt.nz or the Authorised Provider at your local District Health Board.

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New Zealand Government