

How reliable is breast screening ?

Mammography is the most reliable way of detecting breast cancer early but, like other screening tests it is not perfect.

For example:

- Some cancers are very difficult to see on the x-ray;
- Some cancers, even though they are there, cannot be seen on the x-ray at all;
- The person reading the x-ray may miss the cancer (this will happen occasionally, no matter how experienced the reader is).

Does breast cancer screening prevent breast cancer ?

No, breast cancer screening only helps to find breast cancer if it is already there. You should be aware of any changes in your breasts because breast cancer can develop at any time. Some women will develop cancer before their first mammograms or between mammograms.

There is a simple five-point breast awareness code that all women should remember.

- Know what is normal for you.
- Look and feel your breasts.
- Know what changes to look for (lumps, pain, discharge from the nipple or anything else unusual)
- Tell your doctor about any changes immediately.
- Go for breast screening

Summary

To help you decide whether or not to come for screening, the main benefits and difficulties of screening for breast cancer are explained below

- Most breast cancers are found at an early stage when there is a good chance of a successful recovery
- Around half the cancers that are found at screening are still small enough to be removed from the breast. This means that the whole breast does not have to be removed
- Breast screening reduces the risk of women dying from breast cancer.
- We will call some women back for more investigations. Often we find that many of these women do not have breast cancer.
- Screening can miss some breast cancers
- Not all breast cancer found at screening can be cured.
- Many women find mammography uncomfortable or painful but normally just for a brief period of time.

There are many reasons for changes in the breast. Most of them are harmless but you should get all of them checked as there is a small chance that they could be the first sign of cancer.

Breast awareness and regular mammograms together offer you the best chance of finding breast cancer early.



Breast Cancer Screening

The Facts

What is breast screening ?

- Breast screening (mammography) is an x-ray examination of the breast.
- Breast screening can show breast cancer at an early stage, when they are too small for you or your doctor to feel.
- A mammogram takes a few minutes and involves a tiny dose of radiation, so the risk to your health is very small.
- The time spent at your appointment will be about half an hour

Please do not wear any talcum powder or deodorant on the day of your mammogram

Please see your letter for the date and time of your appointment for Breast Screening.

Breast screening contact number:

20072266 Ext:2284

Why do I need breast screening ?

One in nine women will develop breast cancer at some time in their life. Breast cancer is more common in women over 50. Breast screening can help to find small changes in the breast before there are any other signs or symptoms

Should all women have breast screening ?

We invite all women aged between 40 and 74, every 1,2 or 3 years.

Breast cancer risk increases as women get older. So even though women over 74 are not automatically invited for breast screening, you are still encouraged to go for breast screening every three years. You can ask your G.P. to refer you.

Whatever age you are, if you are ever worried about any breast problem, please contact your doctor who may refer you for a specialist opinion if necessary.

What happens during breast screening ?

When you arrive, feel free to ask any questions you have about breast screening.

When you have undressed to the waist and are ready and comfortable, a specialist member of staff will explain mammography to you and ask you a few questions. Your breast will be placed, one at a time, between two special plates and take the x-rays.

Mammography takes a few minutes and your breasts are only pressed for a few seconds each. There is no evidence that this procedure harms the breast.

Does breast screening hurt ?

Some women find breast screening uncomfortable and some find it painful as the breasts have to be held firmly in position and pressed to take a good x-ray. If you do experience pain it usually only lasts for as long as the mammogram, although it may continue for some time in a small number of women

When do I get my results ?

When you have had your mammogram, the specialist member of staff will tell you how and approximately when you will get your results. Make sure you receive this information before you leave.

What does it mean if I am called back ?

Some women are called back because the appearance of the x-ray suggests that more tests are needed. Do not be surprised if we call you back and then the tests show that there is nothing to worry about. Most women will not have any problems and we will call them back when they are due for routine screening .

What if I need treatment ?

If we call you back and you need treatment, a team will look after you. They will make sure you get a high quality of care and treatment at all times.