



BreastScreen
Aotearoa

Having a mammogram

[TimeToBreastScreen.nz](https://www.timetobreastscreen.nz)

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.

Your mammogram is free.

Finding the BreastScreen Aotearoa clinics and mobile units

You can have a mammogram at a BreastScreen Aotearoa clinic or mobile unit. Most are wheelchair accessible.

To find the clinic or mobile unit closest to you, or to change where you have your mammogram, use the link in your screening invitation or freephone

0800 270 200. To see the mobile unit schedule online go to **info.health.nz/keeping-healthy/cancer-screening/breast-screening/breast-screening-clinic-locations**



What do I do now?

For your first mammogram you need to confirm your enrolment and book your appointment. You can do this using the personalised link in your invitation, or by freephoning **0800 270 200**.

You will be sent screening invitations every 2 years. You can arrange each appointment using the link provided or via the freephone number. You can also update your details or change when or where you have your mammogram. Please read the **Screening for breast cancer** pamphlet if you haven't already.

Before each appointment, we will ask 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.

You can provide this information using the link in your invitation or by freephoning **0800 270 200**. We may need to change your appointment or give you a longer appointment.

On the day of your mammogram

- Please do not use deodorant, talcum powder, moisturiser, sunscreen, perfume or creams on your breasts or armpits. These make it harder to see cancers on x-rays.
- If you have used something on your skin, please tell the Medical Imaging Technologist (MIT) (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 completed *Client Details Form* if you have one.
- Bring your reading glasses in case you need them.
- Tell the MIT if you have breast implants or are on hormone replacement therapy.
- Tell the MIT if you have a cardiac device such as a pacemaker.

Your appointment should take 20–30 minutes.

You may bring a support person or whānau member 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 digital 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 Medical Imaging Technologist (MIT) who takes the mammogram. All of the MITs are women. If you have any questions or concerns, talk to the MIT.

What happens during a mammogram?

The MIT will have you stand close to the mammogram machine and pull back your cape or gown. The MIT 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 MIT 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 MIT 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 MIT 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 MIT 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 MIT 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 MIT is not checking for cancer; this can only be done by a radiologist.

Once the MIT 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.

Breast implants

Please tell the MIT if you have breast implants before your mammogram. Implants can hide some of your breast tissue, making it more difficult to detect cancer. More x-rays may be needed than usual. There is also a very small risk a breast implant could be damaged during a mammogram. This risk increases for older implants.

For more information talk with your doctor, nurse or hauora provider, visit **TimeToBreastScreen.nz** or freephone **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 contact you about your results within 2-3 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 by freephoning **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 Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora or its agents using your National Health Index Number.

Your rights

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 the right to:

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

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

You can ask for more information about your rights when you visit a BreastScreen Aotearoa clinic or mobile unit. You can also read more about your rights at [hdc.org.nz](https://www.hdc.org.nz)

The Health Information Privacy Code protects your privacy. You can read about the code at [privacy.org.nz](https://www.privacy.org.nz)

To find out how to make a complaint or to opt off BreastScreen Aotearoa, freephone **0800 270 200**. You can also contact an advocate from the Office of the Health and Disability Commission for help on **0800 11 22 33**.



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Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government