



*Information for
women aged 70
years and over*



BreastScreen Aotearoa provides a free breast screening service to check for breast cancer in women aged 45 to 69. There is no evidence that regular breast screening reduces the rate of deaths from breast cancer in women over 75 years.

The Ministry of Health is reviewing the screening age range for the BreastScreen Aotearoa programme, but currently does not offer free mammograms to those aged 70 or over.

Women aged 70 years and over

If you are aged 70 years or over, you cannot have free mammograms with BreastScreen Aotearoa. There is very little evidence of the benefit of screening women over 70.

What about my risk of developing breast cancer?

The risk of developing breast cancer increases as you get older. If you are otherwise well, discuss with your doctor whether you should still have mammograms. There is a charge for screening mammograms for women who are not part of the BreastScreen Aotearoa programme. Mammograms are available from radiology services. Talk to your doctor about the cost and how to be referred to a radiology service for a mammogram.

What if I have a family history of breast cancer?

Women who have a family history of breast cancer may have a greater chance of developing the disease. However, even among women with a family history, most will not develop breast cancer. Breast cancer that occurs in women with a family history of it usually does so before the age of 70. For women over 70 with a family history of breast cancer, the risk of developing the disease is only slightly higher than it is for women of the same age who do not have a family history. You can discuss your risk with your doctor.

Can some women over 70 have free mammograms?

Yes, mammograms are still an important part of checking breast symptoms (for example, a breast lump or change) in women over 70 years of age.

Some women over 70 years who are at a greater than average risk of getting breast cancer and do not already have a breast problem or symptom can have free mammograms at a public hospital if they have one (or more) of the following:

- a mother or sister who developed breast cancer before menopause or developed cancer in both breasts
- a previous breast cancer
- a previous biopsy of breast tissue showing an 'at-risk lesion'.

These mammograms will not be part of the BreastScreen Aotearoa programme. You must be referred by a doctor.

How can I check for early breast cancer?

It is important for all women (whether or not they are having mammograms) to get to know what their breasts are like normally. If you feel or notice anything that is not usual for you, have it checked by your doctor.

What should I look for?

The most common sign of breast cancer is a lump or thickening.

Possible signs of breast cancer are:

- a new lump or thickening
- a change in breast shape or size
- pain in the breast that is unusual
- puckering or dimpling of the skin
- any change in one nipple, such as:
 - a turned-in nipple
 - a discharge that occurs without squeezing
- a rash or reddening of the skin that appears only on the breast.

While these signs may not be cancer, you need to check them with your doctor, even if you've recently had a mammogram. Women of any age with breast cancer symptoms can have free mammograms at a public hospital with a doctor's referral.

For more information about breast screening, read the pamphlet *Having a Mammogram Every Two Years Improves a Women's Chances of Surviving Breast Cancer*. This is available from your local BreastScreen Aotearoa centre, Freephone 0800 270 200.

REMEMBER:

*Women of any age
who feel or notice
anything unusual
about their breasts,
at any time,
should see their doctor.*

New Zealand Government

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

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MANATŪ HAUORA