



BreastScreen
Aotearoa

BreastScreen Aotearoa is a free national breast screening programme that checks for signs of breast cancer. The programme currently offers free mammograms (breast x-rays) every 2 years to women aged 45 to 69 who have no symptoms of breast cancer.

The screening age range is being extended, beginning with Nelson and Marlborough from October 2024.

Information will be added to **TimeToBreastScreen.nz** to explain these changes as they come into effect. To check if the changes apply to you, go to the website or 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.

This resource is available from healthed.govt.nz
or the Authorised Provider at your local Health NZ district.
Revised December 2024 **HE10120 70+ GEN**

FREEPHONE
0800 270 200

Breast screening

Information for women
aged 70 and over

TimeToBreastScreen.nz



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Aotearoa

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government



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Extending the age for breast screening

BreastScreen Aotearoa is extending the age for free breast screening. This four-year phased rollout is for women aged 70 to 74.

Beginning in Nelson and Marlborough from October 2024, this means women living in this area are now eligible for free breast screening:

- if they turn 70 on or after 1 October 2024
- once they are 74, provided they book their screen before turning 75.

For all other areas, the eligible age range is currently still 45 to 69. The aim is to progressively extend the age range for the rest of Aotearoa New Zealand from October 2025.

Visit [TimeToBreastScreen.nz](https://www.timetobreastscreen.nz) or freephone **0800 270 200** to find out more about these changes.

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 happens 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 women not in the eligible age range have free mammograms?

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

Some women 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*. This is available from your local BreastScreen Aotearoa centre, freephone **0800 270 200**, from health.govt.nz, or from your local Authorised Provider.