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BreastScreen
Aotearoa

Having a mammogram

BreastScreen Aotearoa

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Blind Low Vision NZ, Auckland

Transcriber's Note: The logo at the top of the page is BreastScreen Aotearoa and a circle with "Time to screen" inside.

Having a mammogram

This information is from BreastScreen Aotearoa.

BreastScreen Aotearoa is New Zealand's free national breast screening service.

Women aged 45 to 69 (with eligibility currently being rolled out to 74) are eligible for free mammograms every two years through the BreastScreen Aotearoa Service.

This information is about what a mammogram is and why having one every two years is important.

It explains how you can prepare for your mammogram. It also explains the process involved in having your mammogram and how you will get the results of your mammogram.

Our contact number is **0800 270 200**. If you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech impaired or find it hard to talk, you can use the New Zealand Relay Service.

www.nzrelay.co.nz

This information is to 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 your mammogram at a BreastScreen Aotearoa clinic or mobile unit. Most are wheelchair accessible.

You can phone us for free to

- find out whether a clinic or mobile unit is wheelchair friendly
- find out where the clinic or mobile unit closest to you is
- find out when the mobile unit will be near you
- change where you have your mammogram
- confirm your enrolment if this is your first mammogram
- book your mammogram appointment

If you received an invitation to screen via text, there will be a link you can use in that text to change your screening invitation.

You can also phone us for free to change your appointment if you need to.

What do I do now?

Before you have your first mammogram you need to confirm your enrolment and book your appointment. You can do this using the link in the invitation you received by text. You can also do this by phoning us.

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 the invitation you received by text or by phoning us. To make sure we provide for your needs, we may need to change your appointment or give you a longer appointment.

On the day of your mammogram

Some things can make it harder to see cancers when we do your mammogram. To help us, please do not use the following on your breasts or in your armpits on the day when you are having your mammogram

-
- deodorant
 - talcum powder

- moisturiser
- sunscreen
- perfume
- creams

If you forget on the day and have used something on your breast or armpit before your mammogram, please tell the person who takes the mammogram—the Medical Imaging Technologist (MIT). They will give you a cloth to wipe it off.

This is what will happen when you have your mammogram

- You will be asked to undress from the waist up. Please wear a top that is easy to take off, like a shirt or jersey.
- You can wear a taonga, but you may need to have it hanging down your back during your mammogram. You may find it easier to remove your jewellery.

Other helpful things to bring or say when you have your mammogram

- Bring your reading glasses in case you need them.
- Tell the person taking the mammogram if you have breast implants or are on hormone replacement therapy.
- Tell the person taking the mammogram 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. They will be asked to wait for you outside the room when you have your mammogram. This is because x-rays are taken during the process.

This is what happens when you arrive for your mammogram

- The receptionist will ask your name and details.
- You will be asked to read and sign a digital form to agree to have a mammogram.
- Your name will be called
- You will be offered a cape or gown and shown to a private area
- You will be asked to undress from the waist up
- You will be given a gown or something to cover yourself with if you would like one
- You will go into the area with the mammogram machine
- The person who takes the mammogram (the Medical Imaging Technologist or MIT) will also be in the room.

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All our Medical Imaging Technologists are women.

If you have any questions or concerns, talk to the Medical Imaging Technologist.

This is what happens during a mammogram

The Medical Imaging Technologist will ask you to stand close to the mammogram machine and pull back your gown or covering.

The Medical Imaging Technologist will put one of your breasts between two plates on the machine. They will move your breast around until it is in the right place.

The Medical Imaging Technologist will bring the plates together to press your breast firmly for up to a minute while they take an x-ray.

Does it hurt to have a mammogram?

You might find that having your breast pressed firmly is uncomfortable. It does not harm your breasts.

The Medical Imaging Technologist will try to make you comfortable. If you find it painful it is important to tell the Medical Imaging Technologist 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 Medical Imaging Technologist 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. If you have large breasts, the radiographer may need to reposition each breast more often and take more pictures.

The Medical Imaging Technologist will check that the position of your breast is correct in each x-ray and that the x-ray is not blurry. This means that your x-rays will be good enough to send to a radiologist (a specialist doctor).

The Medical Imaging Technologist is not checking for cancer. Only a radiologist can check your x-rays for cancer.

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

Why is it important to press the breasts so firmly between the plates?

Making your breast thin helps the x-ray show very small details. It keeps the breast still to give a clear x-ray image of the inside of your breast. It also reduces the radiation dose.

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. Most 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 Medical Imaging Technologist if you have breast implants before you have 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 <https://bit.ly/4mHEkYu> or phone us.

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 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 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 National Health

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Index Number is the unique seven-character identifier that is a mixture of numbers and letters that is assigned to everyone using health services in New Zealand.

Your rights

Your rights are protected by the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights. These rights are available in accessible formats here: <https://bit.ly/4tN3oij>

All BreastScreen Aotearoa facilities must 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

<https://www.hdc.org.nz>

The Health Information Privacy Code protects your privacy. You can read about the code

at <https://bit.ly/4me6079>

To find out how to make a complaint or to opt out of BreastScreen Aotearoa, please phone us. You can also contact an advocate from the Office of the Health and Disability Commission for help on **0800 11 22 33**. If you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech impaired or find it hard to talk, you can use the New Zealand Relay Service. www.nzrelay.co.nz

There is an online calculator to find out your eligibility. The calculator is not in alternate formats and may not be accessible. If you need help to access it, you can ask a family member, friend or your GP. You can find the calculator here: <https://bit.ly/3QPrPy6>

Link to full document

<https://bit.ly/4cf2E0n>

Contact details

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www.nzrelay.co.nz

You can phone us to enrol, book or change your free mammogram appointment if you are eligible for screening. Hours of operation for the phone line depend on the service hours of your regional provider.

For general enquiries about screening, email screening@health.govt.nz

For support in your area to help overcome barriers to screening go to <https://bit.ly/4sol4iM>

For more information about screening, including the location of your local screening service provider, go to <https://bit.ly/4mHEkYu>

End of Having a mammogram