



NHS
BREAST
SCREENING
THE FACTS

WHY HAVE BREAST SCREENING?

One in twelve women in the UK develops breast cancer at some time in her life and it is much 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 of cancer. If these changes are found at an early stage, there is a good chance of a successful recovery.

WHAT IS BREAST SCREENING?

Breast screening (mammography) is an x-ray examination of the breasts.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Free breast screening is being offered by the NHS to all women aged 50 to 64.

If you are under 50, you will not receive an invitation for breast screening. General mammography of women under 50 has not yet proved to be helpful in reducing the number of deaths from cancer. However, if you are ever worried about any breast problem, contact your doctor who will refer you for a specialist opinion if necessary.

If you are 65 or over you will not automatically be invited for screening, but you will be screened free if you request it. If you are interested in being screened, talk to your GP or contact your local screening office.

HOW WILL THE SERVICE WORK?

All women in the UK aged 50 to 64 who are registered with a GP will receive an invitation to attend a screening centre for mammography every three years. If you are in this age group, your name will be taken from your GP's list and you will receive an invitation. It is very important that your GP always has your correct name and address. So remember to let your doctor know if you move house.

In most parts of the country, GP practices are invited for screening in turn. So you will not necessarily receive an invitation in the year that you turn 50. However, provided you are registered with a GP you will be invited within three years of your fiftieth birthday.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GO FOR BREAST SCREENING?

The screening centre may be in a hospital or clinic, or it may be a mobile unit. On arrival a female radiographer will explain to you what will happen and will ask you a few questions. Feel free to ask her any questions you may have about the service.

When you are ready and comfortable the female radiographer will compress first one and then the other breast between two special plates and take the x-rays. Many women find the test uncomfortable, and some find it painful. If you do experience some pain, this should last no longer than the test – just a few minutes.

When you have had the mammogram you should be told how and approximately when you will get the results. Make sure you have been given this information before you leave.

AFTER MAMMOGRAPHY - THE RESULTS

Most women will receive a normal result and will be automatically recalled in three years' time.

Some women will need to have the test repeated for a technical reason before the results can be given. For example there may have been a problem with the x-ray film.

Some women will be recalled because the appearance of the x-ray suggests that further investigation is needed. Do not be surprised if you are recalled and then told there's nothing to worry about: most women will be found not to have any problems and will then be recalled in three years' time.

If you are recalled, and found to need further treatment, you will be cared for by a team working with you and for you, to ensure that you receive the best care and treatment at all times.



BREAST AWARENESS FIVE-POINT CODE

- Know what is normal *for you*
- Look and feel
- Know what changes to look for
- Report any changes *without delay*
- Attend for breast screening if aged 50 or over

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