

## Breast Screening

Answering your questions about screening mammography

***BC Cancer Breast Screening provides free screening mammograms.***

### What is a screening mammogram?

Mammograms are x-rays of the breasts completed in privacy by a specially-trained female technologist. A screening mammogram consists of four images (two of each breast) that look for hidden cancer if you are healthy (no symptoms) and have never had breast cancer. If you are experiencing symptoms including a lump or nipple discharge, you should see your health care provider immediately to determine if other testing is required.

### What happens during a mammogram?

1. A female medical radiation technologist will place your breast on a special x-ray machine.
2. A plastic plate will be used to hold your breast in place for a few seconds.
3. You will feel some pressure on your breast during the x-ray. Compression is necessary to spread the breast tissue and eliminate motion, which may blur the picture. This may be uncomfortable and usually lasts no more than 10 seconds.
4. Four pictures are taken, two of each breast.
5. The technologist will check the quality of the pictures to make sure the radiologist can read them. Then, if needed, the technologist may take additional pictures.

### Why are mammograms important?



Mammograms save lives. They help find cancer when it is small, allowing more treatment options and a better chance of recovery.



Mammograms can usually find lumps two or three years before you or your health care provider can feel them. Research has shown a 25 per cent reduction in deaths from breast cancer among those who regularly screen.



Breast cancer risk increases with age. 80 per cent of breast cancer cases are diagnosed in women 50 years of age or older.



It is estimated that 1 in 8 BC women will get breast cancer in their lifetime.

### What are the limitations and other considerations of mammography?

- Not all breasts look the same on a mammogram. Your age or breast density can make cancers more or less difficult to see. In general, screening mammograms are less effective if you are younger because you tend to have denser breast tissue.
- Some cancers cannot be detected on a mammogram due to the location of the cancer or the density of your breast tissue. About 25 percent of cancers among those ages 40-49 are not detectable by a screening mammogram, compared to about 10 per cent of those older than 50.
- On average, nine per cent of those screened through BC Cancer Breast Screening will require additional testing to look more closely at a specific area of the breast. This does not mean that a cancer was found – 95 per cent of those recalled for additional testing do not have cancer.
- Mammograms use low doses of radiation. The benefits of regular mammograms outweigh the risks posed by the small amount of radiation you are exposed to.

Learn more about the benefits and limitations of mammograms: [www.screeningbc.ca/breast](http://www.screeningbc.ca/breast)

## Is there anything I can do to prepare for my mammogram?

- Try to schedule an appointment when your breasts are least sensitive (within 10 days of your last period).
- Do not use deodorant, powder, creams or lotions on the day of the appointment. These products may leave a residue that can make it hard to read your mammogram.
- Wear a two-piece outfit with a top that opens in the front. You will be asked to undress from the waist up.
- You may also find it helpful to avoid caffeine several days before an exam.

## Who should consider getting a screening mammogram?

Screening mammograms are available for BC women 40 years and older. You may call directly to book your appointment.

| Age   | Screen how often?  |
|---|--|
| <b>40-74</b><br>mother, daughter, sister<br>w/breast cancer | <b>Recommended every year.</b>   |
| <b>40-49</b><br>no family history                           | <b>Available every two years.</b><br>Talk to your health care provider about when to start screening.        |
| <b>50-74</b><br>no family history                           | <b>Recommended every two years.</b>  |
| <b>75+</b>  | <b>Available every two to three years.</b><br>Talk to your health care provider about when to stop screening |

Screening mammograms are recommended every year if you are between 30-74 with at least one of the following:

- You are a BRCA1 or BRCA2 carrier;
- You are an un-tested first degree relative of BRCA1 or BRCA2 carrier;
- Have a very strong family history of breast cancer; or,
- Have had prior chest wall radiation.

Speak to your health care provider for information and referral.

You should screen regularly if you are a transgender person with chest (breast) tissue or undergoing gender-affirming hormone therapy. Visit [screeningbc.ca/breast](http://screeningbc.ca/breast) for more information.

## How do I make a screening mammography appointment?

| Book directly at the following screening centres:   |                             |               |                |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Abbotsford  | 604-851-4750                | Nanaimo       | 250-716-5904   |
| Burnaby   | 604-436-0691                | North         | 604-903-3860   |
| Comox Valley  | 250-331-5949                | Vancouver     | 250-770-7573   |
| Coquitlam   | 604-927-2130                | Penticton     | 250-645-6654   |
| Delta   | 604-877-6187                | Prince George | 604-244-5505   |
| Kamloops  | 250-828-4916                | Richmond      | 604-582-4592   |
| Kelowna   | 250-861-7560                | Surrey        | 250-549-5451   |
| Langley   | 604-514-6044                | Vernon        | 604-535-4512   |
|   |                             | White Rock    |                |
| Vancouver   | 505-750 West Broadway       |               | 604-879-8700   |
|   | 5752 Victoria Drive         |               | 604-321-6770   |
|   | BC Women's Health Centre    |               | 604-775-0022   |
|   | Mount St Joseph Hospital    |               | 604-877-8388   |
| Victoria  | 305 - 1990 Fort Street      |               | 250-952-4232   |
|   | Victoria—General Hospital   |               | 250-727-4338   |
| Other Locations   | Client Services Call Centre |               | 1-800-663-9203 |
| For a list of additional centre locations and the mobile mammography service, please visit <a href="http://www.screeningbc.ca/breast">www.screeningbc.ca/breast</a> . Please have your BC Services Card/CareCard and health care provider's name available when you call to book your appointment. Call Centre hours: Monday to Friday, 8:00 am - 5:30 pm and Saturday, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm |                             |               |                |

## Contact Us

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