

High-Risk Breast Screening Intervals for HRC Patients

Your breast screening imaging appointments are booked separately. This is because MRI and mammogram appointments are scheduled at different times and at different sites.

The most important thing is to have **both a breast MRI and a mammogram every year.**

Your screening schedule

Mammogram due [Month, Year]	
Breast MRI due: [Month, Year]	

MRI and mammograms look for different signs of breast cancer.

A **mammogram** is very good at finding tiny calcium spots in the breast. These spots can sometimes be one of the earliest signs of cancer.

An **MRI** looks at how breast tissue takes up contrast dye and blood flow. It can find changes that may not show up on a mammogram.

Because these tests look for different things, one test cannot replace the other.

For example:

- Some changes can be seen on a mammogram, but not on an MRI.
- Some changes can be seen on an MRI but not on a mammogram.
- Doing both tests every year increases the likelihood of finding cancer compared to either test on its own.

That is why we recommend having **both tests every year.**

Some screening programs book mammograms and MRIs six months apart. However, research has not shown that this schedule is better than making sure both tests are done every year. For this reason, the High-Risk Clinic focuses on ensuring that you receive both your mammogram and MRI each year, rather than on any particular schedule.

We understand that waiting between screening tests can be stressful. It is important to remember that screening tests are meant for people who do not have any symptoms.

If you notice a new breast concern, do not wait for your next screening appointment.

Please contact the High-Risk Clinic or your primary care provider if you notice:

- A new lump or thickening in the breast
- Changes to the breast skin
- New nipple changes or nipple discharge
- Ongoing breast pain that concerns you
- Any other new or unusual breast change.

These concerns can be checked sooner if needed.

If you have questions about your screening schedule, please contact us.

Developed by R.Morash, RN., and R. Cheifetz, MD. 2026.

Professional background and supporting literature available through the BC Cancer High-Risk Clinic website.

Primary reference: Wang X et al. *Current Oncology*. 2022;29(3):2119-2131.

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