



Breast screening

for women at a higher
risk of breast cancer

www.phw.nhs.wales/breast-screening



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You can read this information on our website in large print or listen to it using read aloud. Contact us if you need this information in other languages or braille.

It is your choice whether to have breast screening or not. This leaflet aims to help you decide.

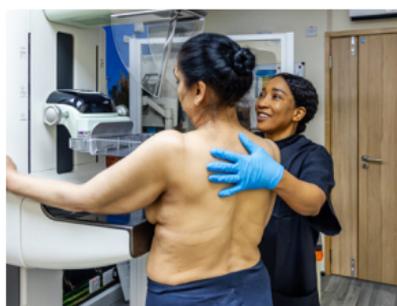
Why am I being offered breast screening?

You have been assessed by a specialist as having a higher risk of developing breast cancer. Women with a higher risk are offered breast screening at an earlier age than women from the general population. If you do not think you should have been invited for higher risk breast screening, let us know straightaway.

Breast screening tests

There are two types of screening tests.

Mammography (breast x-ray)



A radiographer or mammography practitioner will position your breasts, one at a time, onto the x-ray machine. They will then lower the plastic plate onto your breasts to produce good-quality x-rays (mammograms). The dose of radiation used will be low. Usually, two x-rays of each breast are taken, one from

above and one from the side. You will need to keep still while the x-rays are taken.

Some women find having a mammogram uncomfortable and a few may find it painful. We need to press your breasts between the two plates to get the best possible image. The pressure will only last for a few seconds. Any pain usually passes quickly.

MRI (magnetic resonance imaging)



This is a type of scan that uses strong magnetic fields and radio waves to take pictures of the inside of the body. You will

be asked to lie face down on a bed that moves slowly into the scanner. There are cushioned holes for your breasts, and a rest for your head. The staff can help support you if you find it difficult.

You may have an injection into a vein in your arm. The injection contains gadolinium, a clear fluid that is used to make the MRI pictures clearer. Small amounts of gadolinium may remain in the body after a scan. There is currently

no evidence that these small amounts cause any harm. Gadolinium is essential for diagnosing life-threatening diseases, including breast cancer. If you need a scan using gadolinium, we will use the lowest dose needed for a clear image.

The scan is painless. You need to lie still, but we will make you as comfortable as possible before starting the scan.

The whole appointment usually lasts between 30 and 60 minutes.

Not everyone can have MRI scans due to the magnetic field. Before the scan, staff will ask you some questions to make sure it is safe for you to have the scan.

If you have any questions about your scan you can speak to a member of staff.

MRI for breast screening is carried out at specialist centres based in hospitals across Wales.

We will offer you an MRI or a mammogram, or possibly both. It will depend on your age and the reason you have been offered screening. Your specialist will have already let you know what type of screening you will be offered.

Your questions answered

What if I have had recent breast tests?

Contact us if you have had a mammogram or an MRI of your breasts within the last six months.

Where do I go for breast screening?

Your letter tells you where you need to go and how to arrange or change your appointment.

What should I wear?

Wear a separate top as you will have to undress to the waist. Do not wear clothes that have any metal on them, because of the magnetic field of the scanner.

What if I have implants or breast fillers?

Because implants and fillers are dense and will hide some of your breast tissue, there is a greater chance that if you have breast cancer it may not be seen on an x-ray.

What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

Contact your local Breast Test Wales screening centre if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

What if I do not want to be screened?

Contact your local Breast Test Wales screening centre.

What if I am considering or waiting for risk-reducing surgery?

We recommend that you continue to have screening until you have had surgery.

What happens after the tests?

Our specialist staff will review your scans and x-rays. We aim to send you your results by post within three weeks.

We may need to call you back because of a technical fault. We will tell you if this is the reason.

If the tests show possible changes, we will invite you to the Breast Test Wales screening centre for more tests.

If you are called back, you may have a breast examination, more mammograms or ultrasound scans.

You may also have a biopsy, which is when a small sample is taken from your breast with a needle. Local anaesthetic will be used to make the biopsy area numb. The sample will be checked under a microscope. We will give you an appointment to return for the results. You will usually receive this appointment within two weeks.

What if I need treatment?

If you are diagnosed with breast cancer, finding it early gives you the best chance of successful treatment.

A team of breast cancer specialists will discuss your treatment options with you. You will be supported throughout your care.

When you reach the age of 50

From the age of 50, women who have a moderate risk of breast cancer will no longer need more frequent screening and will be invited for routine breast screening every three years. Women get their first routine screening invitation sometime between their 50th and 53rd birthdays.

However, we will continue to invite you for screening more regularly if you have been treated for cancer with

radiotherapy to the chest area, or if you have been assessed by the All Wales Medical Genomics Service as being at high risk or very high risk due to your family history.

If you were screened using MRI and mammograms, you may change to mammograms only. This is because mammograms are better at finding breast cancers in women over 50. Some women will continue to have MRIs as well as mammograms.

When you reach the age of 70

All routine breast screening invitations stop at the age of 70, whether you have been having screening every year or every three years.

You can continue to have screening from the age of 70 by contacting your local breast screening service to make an appointment.

- If you have been invited for screening every year up to the age of 70, you can ask for an appointment **every year**.
- If you have been invited for screening every three years up to the age of 70, you can ask for an appointment **every three years**.

Making a choice – benefits and risks of breast screening

It is your choice to have breast screening.

- Screening is the best way of finding breast cancer early.
- Most breast cancers found at screening are at an early stage, when there is a good chance of successful treatment.
- Some cancers are very difficult to see and may be missed. Some cancer cannot be seen.
- Breast cancer can develop between screening tests, even if your last screening result showed no sign of cancer.
- We cannot cure all breast cancers found at screening.
- It is not known if screening women who have a higher risk of developing breast cancer will reduce their risk of dying from breast cancer.
- We offer to treat all breast cancers.

This means you may be offered more treatment than needed, as screening might find cancer that would never have become life-threatening.

- Mammograms use x-rays to take images of the breast. X-rays are a type of radiation, which carries a very small risk of causing cancer. This risk is very low, and the benefit of finding and treating cancers early greatly outweighs the risk.
- You may worry if you are invited back for further tests. However, most women who are invited back do not have breast cancer.

If new evidence shows that some screening is not beneficial, we would stop the screening but would discuss this with you.

Being breast aware

No screening test can detect every cancer, and cancer can develop between screening appointments.

Everyone should be breast aware. This means knowing how your breasts normally look and feel.

If you notice any changes in your breasts, speak to your doctor (GP) as soon as possible. Do not wait for your next screening appointment.

Touch your breasts. Can you feel anything unusual?

Look for changes. Is there any change in shape or texture?

Check anything unusual with your doctor.



You can read or download our leaflet, **Be Breast Aware**, here:



More information and support

If you have any questions about the higher risk screening service, contact your Breast Test Wales Screening Centre.

South East Wales

Breast Test Wales, 18 Cathedral Road,
Cardiff, CF11 9LJ

☎ 029 2039 7222

@ south-breast-screening@wales.nhs.uk

West Wales

Breast Test Wales, 24 Alexandra Road,
Swansea, SA1 5DY

☎ 01792 459988

@ west-breast-screening@wales.nhs.uk

North Wales

Breast Test Wales, Maes Du Road,
Llandudno, LL30 1QY

☎ 01492 860888

@ north-breast-screening@wales.nhs.uk

You can contact us in Welsh or English. It will take us the same amount of time to answer you, whichever language you choose.

For us to contact you as part of this programme, we will need to access your contact and clinical information.

If you need more information about this, you can:

visit the website

www.phw.nhs.wales/breast-screening

email

PHW.InformationGovernance@wales.nhs.uk

or phone

02920 104307

