

Breast screening

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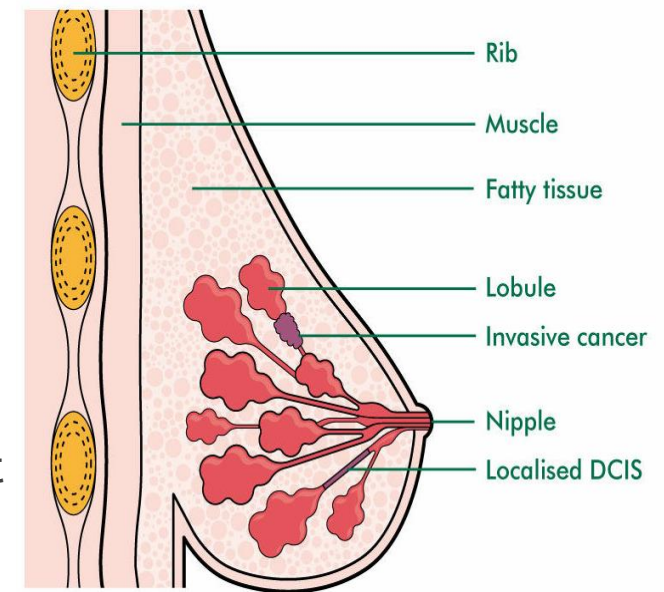
Breast cancer - the basics

Cancer is a broad term for a class of diseases characterized by abnormal cells that grow and invade healthy cells in the body. Breast cancer starts in the cells of the breast as a group of cancer cells that can then invade surrounding tissues or spread (metastasize) to other areas of the body.

<https://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/what-is-cancer/>

Breast cancer - the basics- types

- ▶ There are several different types of breast cancer, which develop in different parts of the breast.
 - ▶ Breast cancer is often divided into either:
 - non-invasive breast cancer (carcinoma in situ) - found in the ducts of the breast (ductal carcinoma in situ, or DCIS) which has not spread into the breast tissue surrounding the ducts. Non-invasive breast cancer is usually found during a mammogram and rarely shows as a breast lump.
 - invasive breast cancer - where the cancer cells have spread through the lining of the ducts into the surrounding breast tissue. This is the most common type of breast cancer.
- Other, less common types of breast cancer include:
- invasive (and pre-invasive) lobular breast cancer
 - inflammatory breast cancer
 - Paget's disease of the breast
- ▶ It's possible for breast cancer to spread to other parts of the body, usually through the blood or the axillary lymph nodes. These are small lymphatic glands that filter bacteria and cells from the mammary gland.
 - ▶ If this happens, it's known as secondary, or metastatic, breast cancer.



Breast cancer - the basics

- ▶ Anyone can get breast cancer. This includes women, men, trans and non-binary people.
- ▶ It's the most common type of cancer in the UK. Each year, about 55,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer in the UK.
- ▶ The chance of getting breast cancer increases as you get older. Most breast cancers are diagnosed in women over 50 years old but younger women can also get breast cancer. About 8 out of 10 cases of breast cancer happen in women over 50.
- ▶ **About 1 in 8 women are diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime.** There's a good chance of recovery if it's detected at an early stage.
- ▶ For this reason, it's vital that women check their breasts regularly for any changes and always have any changes examined by a GP.
- ▶ In rare cases, men can also be diagnosed with breast cancer.

What is breast screening?

- ▶ Breast screening uses X-rays called mammograms to check your breasts for signs of cancer.
- ▶ It's done by health specialists called mammographers.
- ▶ Regular breast screening is one of the best ways to spot a cancer that is too small to feel or see. **Regular breast screening can find breast cancer before you notice any signs or symptoms.**
- ▶ Breast screening saves around 1,300 lives each year in the UK.
- ▶ Finding cancer early can make it:
 - more likely that treatment will be successful
 - less likely you'll need to have a breast removed ([mastectomy](#))
 - more likely you'll be cured
- ▶ You can have breast screening whatever size or shape your breasts are.

Risks of breast screening

Doctors cannot always tell if a cancer will go on to be life-threatening or not. So treatment is always offered if you're diagnosed with breast cancer.

- ▶ This means some cancers that are diagnosed and treated would not have been life-threatening. Treatment of non life-threatening cancers is the main risk of breast screening.

Other risks of breast screening include:

- It might increase your chances of having extra tests and interventions, including surgery, even if you're not affected by breast cancer.
- a cancer being missed - mammograms do not always find a cancer that is there
- X-rays - having a mammogram every 3 years for 20 years gives you a very slightly higher chance of getting cancer over your lifetime

Most people feel the benefits of breast screening outweigh the possible risks.

When you'll be invited

- ▶ Anyone registered with a GP as female will be invited for NHS breast screening every 3 years between the ages of 50 and 71. You'll get a letter in the post inviting you.
- ▶ If you have not been invited for breast screening by the time you are 53 and think you should have been, contact your local breast screening service.
- ▶ **If you are 71 or over-** You will not automatically be invited for breast screening if you are 71 or over. But you can still have breast screening every 3 years if you want to. You will need to call your local breast screening service to ask for an appointment.
- ▶ You can locate breast screening services here: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Breast-screening-services/LocationSearch/325>

What happens at your breast screening appointment?

- ▶ During breast screening you'll have 4 breast X-rays (mammograms), 2 for each breast.
- ▶ The mammograms are done by a specialist called a mammographer.
- ▶ The mammograms only take a few minutes. The whole appointment should take about 30 minutes.

Your breast screening results

- ▶ You will usually get your results within 2 weeks of your breast screening appointment. They will be sent to you by letter.
- ▶ They will also be sent to the GP surgery you are registered with.
- ▶ Rarely you may need to have another mammogram to get a clearer picture of your breasts. Your results would be sent after this second breast screening appointment.

What your result means:

- ▶ **No sign of breast cancer**
- ▶ Your breast screening result letter may say that your mammogram shows no sign of breast cancer.
- ▶ You will not need any further tests and will be invited again in 3 years.
- ▶ Most people who have breast screening will have no sign of cancer.
- ▶ **Need further tests**
- ▶ Your results may say further tests are needed. You will be given an appointment.

These tests can include:

- an examination of your breast
- more mammograms
- ultrasound scans of your breast
- taking a small sample (biopsy) from your breast using a needle

You will usually get your results within 1 week.

- ▶ Macmillan Cancer Support has a free helpline that's open every day from 8am to 8pm. They're there to listen if you have anything you want to talk about.
Call: [0808 808 00 00](tel:0808808000)

How should I check my breasts?

- ▶ As well as going for regular breast screening, it's important you know how your breasts normally look and feel. Cancers can develop between mammograms.
- ▶ If you notice any changes in your breasts that are not normal for you, **see a GP straightaway.**
- ▶ There's no right or wrong way to check your breasts. But it's important to know how your breasts usually look and feel. That way, you can spot any changes quickly and report them to a GP.
- ▶ **Be breast aware**
- ▶ Every woman's breasts are different in terms of size, shape and consistency. It's also possible for one breast to be larger than the other.
- ▶ Get used to how your breasts feel at different times of the month. This can change during your menstrual cycle. For example, some women have tender and lumpy breasts, especially near the armpit, around the time of their period.
- ▶ After the menopause, normal breasts feel softer, less firm and not as lumpy.

How should I check my breasts?

- ▶ The [NHS Breast Screening Programme](#) has produced a 5-point plan for being breast aware:
 - know what's normal for you
 - look at your breasts and feel them
 - know what changes to look for
 - report any changes to a GP without delay
 - attend routine screening if you're aged 50 to 70
- ▶ Look at your breasts and feel each breast and armpit, and up to your collarbone. You may find it easiest to do this in the shower or bath, by running a soapy hand over each breast and up under each armpit.
- ▶ You can also look at your breasts in the mirror. Look with your arms by your side and also with them raised.
- ▶ <https://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/check-your-breasts/>
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojddACFfVa8>

Useful pdf guide to breast examination : https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/03/159-Keep-Yourself-Healthy-A-Guide-To-Examining-Your-Breasts_Easy-Read.pdf

Breast changes to look out for:

See a GP if you notice any of the following changes:

- a change in the size, outline or shape of your breast
- a change in the look or feel of the skin on your breast, such as puckering or dimpling, a rash or redness
- a new lump, swelling, thickening or bumpy area in one breast or armpit that was not there before
- a discharge of fluid from either of your nipples
- any change in nipple position, such as your nipple being pulled in or pointing differently
- a rash (like eczema), crusting, scaly or itchy skin or redness on or around your nipple
- any discomfort or pain in one breast, particularly if it's a new pain and does not go away (although pain is only a symptom of breast cancer in rare cases)
- ▶ **Always see a GP if you are concerned, if you have symptoms or any concerns - See a GP on the same day even if you have recently had a clear breast screening.**
- ▶ **Do not wait for your next breast screening appointment.**

Risk

- ▶ Some people are more likely to get breast cancer. This is sometimes called moderate risk or high risk.
- ▶ You may have a higher chance of getting breast cancer if you have:
 - several close relatives who have had breast or ovarian cancer or both
 - a change in a gene (mutation) that makes you more likely to get breast cancer - these include BRCA1, BRCA2 or TP53
- ▶ **Speak to a GP if you think you might have a higher chance of getting breast cancer.**
- ▶ They can refer you to a genetic specialist who will discuss this with you. You may need to have genetic tests.
- ▶ Depending on your chance, you may:
 - be invited for breast screening before you are 50
 - be invited more often than every 3 years
 - have MRI scans as well as mammograms - MRI can give a clearer picture in younger people
- ▶ The specialist looking after you will explain how you will be screened.

References

- ▶ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-screening-mammogram/>
- ▶ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-screening-mammogram/how-to-decide-if-you-want-breast-screening/>
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- ▶ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-cancer/symptoms/>
- ▶ Videos on how to check your breasts:
 - ▶ <https://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/check-your-breasts/>
 - ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojddACFVv8>
- ▶ Useful pdf guide to breast examination : https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/03/159-Keep-Yourself-Healthy-A-Guide-To-Examining-Your-Breasts_Easy-Read.pdf
- ▶ Easy read booklet: <https://be.macmillan.org.uk/be/p-23356-breast-care-for-women.aspx>
- ▶ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-cancer/>