

## What are the possible screening results?

*Normal result:* A normal result means no signs of breast cancer were found. About 93% of women screened have a normal result.

*Abnormal result:* An abnormal result usually isn't cancer. However, any abnormality should be checked right away. Your healthcare provider or the radiology clinic will arrange for more tests, which may include a diagnostic mammogram, an ultrasound, or a biopsy.

To learn more about abnormal screening mammogram results, visit the Breast Cancer "Results and Next Steps" page at [www.screeningforlife.ca](http://www.screeningforlife.ca) or call 1-866-727-3926.

## What is a diagnostic mammogram?

Diagnostic mammograms are special x-rays that take more images than screening mammograms.

**They can be used for several reasons, such as:**

- To look closer at changes found on a screening mammogram.
- For women who've had breast cancer in the past.
- For women who show possible signs of breast cancer.

**Some possible signs of breast cancer are:**

- A new lump in your breast or armpit.
- A nipple turned inward, if it isn't usually.
- Crusting, bleeding or a rash on your nipple.
- Unusual fluid coming from your nipple.
- Dimpling or thickening of skin in one area of your breast.

## Remember

Screening mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early.  
Breast cancer screening saves lives!

## About the Alberta Breast Cancer Screening Program

The Alberta Breast Cancer Screening Program (ABCSP) is part of Alberta Health Services (AHS) and works together with the Alberta Society of Radiologists. The ABCSP mails your screening mammogram results to you via the radiology clinic.

To get letters from the ABCSP, your name and address must be up to date with Alberta Health. If you need to update your information, call 310-0000 (toll free) then dial 780-427-1432.

## Cancer Screening

Screening is one of the best things you can do for yourself to find breast cancer early. Breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screening saves lives.

For more information, please contact AHS Cancer Screening Programs.

- Call 1-866-727-3926
- Fax 1-888-944-3388
- Visit [www.screeningforlife.ca](http://www.screeningforlife.ca)

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Alberta Breast Cancer  
Screening Program



# BREAST SCREENING

Do I Really Need a Mammogram?



SCREENING  
FOR LIFE.CA

# Having screening mammograms regularly is one of the best ways to find breast cancer early.

## What is a screening mammogram?

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast. Screening mammograms are used to check women for breast cancer who have no noticeable breast problems. They can find an abnormality or lump in the breast that's too small to feel.

## Why are screening mammograms important?

About 1 in 8 women in Alberta will get breast cancer during their lifetime. Having regular screening mammograms is the best way to find breast cancer early, when treatment may work better.

## What happens during a mammogram?

A female technologist will do your screening mammogram.

### Once you're in front of the mammography unit:

- Your breast will rest on a plastic plate that's adjusted for your height.
- A second plate will press down on your breast. Spreading out the breast tissue makes it easier to see small abnormalities.
- X-rays will be taken of the top and sides of each breast.

**The whole process takes about 10 minutes.**

## Do mammograms hurt?

Your breasts need to be compressed (flattened) to get the best image, which may be uncomfortable or slightly painful (but tolerable). Each compression is only a few seconds, so any discomfort will be very brief.

If you normally have tender breasts, it may be more comfortable to have your mammogram at least a week before or after your period.



## Should I have a screening mammogram?

Getting screened is your choice. For information on the benefits and risks of screening, see the 'Informed Decision Making' booklet at [www.screeningforlife.ca](http://www.screeningforlife.ca).

The risk of breast cancer increases with age. Generally, women under 40 don't need screening mammograms. If you're concerned that your risk is higher than average, talk to your healthcare provider.

**If you're 40 to 49:** Speak to your healthcare provider about your personal risk of breast cancer and the benefits and risks of screening mammograms. If you decide to have mammograms during this time, having one every year is best.

**If you're 50 to 74:** Have a screening mammogram every 2 years or as often as you and your healthcare provider have decided is best for you. Research shows that regular mammograms can lower breast cancer deaths for women in this age group.

**If you're 75 and over:** Depending on your personal health (how healthy you are overall), you may continue to benefit from regular screening mammograms. Speak to your healthcare provider about whether or not continuing to screen is right for you.

### You should still have regular screening mammograms even if...

- you feel healthy and have no symptoms
- you have no family history of breast cancer
- you have small breasts

	YES	NO
• you feel healthy and have no symptoms	✓	
• you have no family history of breast cancer	✓	
• you have small breasts	✓	

## In addition to screening mammograms:

- Know what looks and feels normal for you. Tell your healthcare provider if you notice any breast changes.

## What are the benefits and risks of screening?

### Benefits

**Lives saved:** Regular screening mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early, when treatment is more likely to be successful.

**Mammograms are safe and effective:** They can find small lumps 2 or 3 years before they can be felt.

**Easier treatment:** Finding breast cancer early often means that less invasive treatment is needed.

**Peace of mind:** You may feel better that you're taking steps to find breast cancer early.



### Risks

**False positive:** Sometimes screening can lead to more testing even when cancer isn't present.

**Over detection:** You may get treated for a cancer that wouldn't become life-threatening if not treated.

**Missed breast cancers:** You may have breast cancer that isn't seen by screening.

**Anxiety:** Screening can be stressful because you may find cancer. You may also find that mammograms are uncomfortable.

## How do I prepare for a mammogram?

When you make your mammogram appointment, you will be asked where and when you had your last mammogram.

### On the day of your appointment:

- Wear a separate top and bottom since you'll have to remove clothing from the waist up.
- Avoid wearing perfume, antiperspirant, deodorant and body powder. These can affect the mammogram results.