

## Where can I get help?

- Talk to your healthcare provider about your results and any questions you may have.
- Call us at 1-866-727-3926 or visit our website at [screeningforlife.ca](http://screeningforlife.ca) for general information about the Alberta Breast Cancer Screening Program.
- Call a friend! An abnormal result doesn't mean you have cancer, but it can be stressful.

## Remember

- Most abnormal results aren't breast cancer.
- Having follow-up tests is important.
- When cancer is found early, there's a better chance that it can be treated.
- The breast cancer death rate has gone down in Alberta since 1990. This is most likely due to an increase in screening mammograms and improved treatment.



## 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

Making Sense of Abnormal  
Mammogram Results



# SCREENING FOR LIFE.CA

An abnormal result usually isn't cancer, but should still be checked right away.  
Talk to your healthcare provider about what follow-up tests you need.

## What does an abnormal result mean?

About 1 in 14 (7%) screens have an abnormal result (finding that needs follow up). An abnormal result usually isn't cancer; however, it means you need more tests to make sure. If you have breast cancer, finding it early means treatment will likely work better.

## What causes an abnormal result?

There are many reasons why your mammogram result may be abnormal. 9 out of 10 (90%) people who get more tests won't have breast cancer.

### **Some common reasons for abnormal results are:**

- Fluid-filled sacs (cysts). Up to 60% of women will have these at some point in their lives.
- Small solid nodules that are not cancer (fibroadenomas).
- Small calcium deposits (benign calcifications).



## What happens after getting an abnormal result?

If you get an abnormal result, it's important to have follow-up tests. Your healthcare provider will have a copy of your results and may have already called you to make an appointment.

## What other tests might I need?

The kinds of tests you need depends on the type of abnormal result found. Having more tests will help determine what, if any, treatment you need.

### **Other types of tests may include:**

- *Diagnostic mammogram*: a special x-ray that takes more images than a screening mammogram. It can be used to look more closely at an abnormality seen on a screening mammogram.
- *Ultrasound*: this test uses sound waves to create an image of your breast. It shows if a breast lump is fluid-filled or solid.
- *Biopsy*: a test which removes a small sample of tissue from the abnormal area to look at it more closely in the laboratory.



## What should I do now?

If you haven't heard from your healthcare provider yet, you should make an appointment to talk about follow-up tests as soon as possible.

It's normal to be worried if your screening mammogram results are abnormal. Just remember that most abnormal results aren't breast cancer. And if you have breast cancer, finding it early gives you more choices, and treatment will likely be more successful.

### **When you go for your follow-up appointment, you may find it helpful to:**

- Write down your questions and bring them with you to your appointment.
- Write down the answers so you can look at them later.
- Take someone with you for support.

