

Your health and wellness matter. Finding cancer early can save your life.

Breast/Chest Cancer Screening for the 2SLGBTQI+ Community

Alberta Health Services Screening Programs welcomes people of every sex, gender identity and sexual orientation to screen for cancer. Before getting screened, it is recommended to speak with your healthcare provider about your personal cancer risk level and whether screening is right for you.

Why is screening important?

Regular screening mammograms (X-rays) of your breast/chest¹ is the best way to find breast/chest cancer early, before you have any symptoms, and when treatment may work better.

Should I get screened?

If you have breast¹ tissue, it's important to consider your need for screening mammograms. Breast tissue is the fatty tissue on top of the chest muscles. People of any gender identity or sexual orientation may need screening mammograms.

When are screening mammograms recommended?

✔ Consider having screening mammograms regularly if you're between the ages of 45 to 74 and you have breast¹ tissue. This includes if:

- You've taken gender affirming hormones (like estrogen) to increase the size of your breasts for 5 or more years in total.
- You haven't had top surgery to remove breast tissue (even if you've had a hysterectomy or are taking testosterone).

Plan to have a screening mammogram **once every 2 years** unless your healthcare provider tells you otherwise.

✔ Remember, it's important to get screening mammograms regularly, even if:

- You have no family history of breast/chest¹ cancer
- You're a lesbian, bisexual, or queer woman
- You've had a hysterectomy
- You're taking testosterone
- You've been through menopause
- You feel healthy and have no symptoms of breast/chest cancer

When are screening mammograms not recommended?

✘ Screening mammograms are not recommended if you do not have breast¹ tissue. This includes if:

- You've taken gender affirming hormones (like estrogen) to increase the size of your breasts for less than five years.
 - It's still important to have counselling around breast [self-awareness](#) and [regular physical examinations](#).
- You've had top surgery to remove breast tissue.
 - Chest¹ self-awareness and regular physical exams are recommended because usually some original breast tissue will remain.

¹ We recognize that many gender diverse people may use different words for their body parts. We use the biological terms as a practice but patients have the right to request that their healthcare providers use different words for their safety and comfort.

What happens during a screening mammogram?



1. A healthcare provider will give you a gown and ask you to remove your top clothing in private.
2. A technologist will bring you into the screening room. One breast¹ at a time will be firmly pressed between two plates to get the best image. It is normal to feel some discomfort, but each compression will last only a few seconds.
3. The entire process will take about 10 minutes.

You can stop the mammogram at any time. If you wish to bring someone with you to your appointment, please let the clinic know when you book your appointment.

What are the benefits and risks of screening mammograms?

+ Benefits

- **Lives saved:** screening mammograms are the best way to find breast/chest¹ cancer early, when treatment works best.
- **Screening is safe and effective:** Mammograms can find small lumps 2 or 3 years before they can be felt.
- **Easier treatment:** Finding breast/chest cancer early often means more tolerable treatment can be used.
- **Peace of mind:** You may feel better knowing that you're taking steps to protect your health and wellness.

⚠ Risks

- **False positives:** Sometimes screening can lead to more testing even when breast/chest¹ cancer isn't present.
- **Over detection:** You may get treated for breast/chest cancer that wouldn't become life-threatening if not treated.
- **False negatives (missed cancers):** You may have breast/chest cancer that isn't seen by screening.

Screening can be worrying for some people due to previous trauma, gender dysphoria, or a lack of trust in healthcare settings. It can be difficult to make breast/chest screening a priority, especially if you're concerned about experiencing discrimination. All patients have the right to receive healthcare without discrimination. Talk to your healthcare provider about your personal screening needs and ways to make screening more comfortable for you.

How can I get screened?

Where to book a screening mammogram

You can book a screening mammogram without a doctor's referral. Use the "Where to Get Screened" tool to find a radiology clinic most convenient for you at www.screeningforlife.ca/where-to-get-screened.

Questions to consider

When booking an appointment, you may be asked if you have breast implants, have had top surgery, or are taking hormones. This is because these factors may affect the appearance of your screening images.

If you need a healthcare provider:

- Visit albertafindadoctor.ca
- Call Health Link at 8-1-1
- Visit search.cpsa.ca
(College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta)

For more information:



Screening Programs

Tel: 1-866-727-3926

Fax: 1-888-944-3388

Web: screeningforlife.ca

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