

## Deciding about breast screening

What are the likely benefits of breast cancer screening?

- Regular breast cancer screening for women aged 50–74 reduces the number of women who die from breast cancer.
- Finding breast cancer early often means that the breast cancer is small, less likely to have spread to other parts of the body and can be more effectively treated.

What are the possible limitations of breast screening?

- Screening mammograms are not 100% accurate. This means that sometimes women might have more tests that may not have been needed.
- For a small number of women, the screening mammogram might not find a breast cancer that is present.
- Some women are diagnosed with breast cancer between screening mammograms.
- Some women may be diagnosed with breast cancer that wouldn't develop into a life-threatening cancer in their lifetime.

## Informed choice

If you are between 40 and 49 or over 74 years of age, low or average risk of breast cancer, and thinking about breast screening, you might choose to talk to your doctor about whether mammography screening is suitable for you. It can be helpful to discuss the benefits and limitations of breast cancer screening with your doctor if you have other health issues to think about.

You might like more information on breast cancer screening before attending; this online tool might help you [mammogram.med.usyd.edu.au/](http://mammogram.med.usyd.edu.au/)

## Remember, be breast aware

- Get to know what your breasts normally look and feel like.
- See a doctor or health worker straight away if you notice any changes.
- If you are 50–74, have a mammogram at BreastScreen WA every two years.

For more information:

BreastScreen WA  
[breastscreen.health.wa.gov.au/](http://breastscreen.health.wa.gov.au/)

Cancer Australia  
[breast-cancer.canceraustralia.gov.au/](http://breast-cancer.canceraustralia.gov.au/)



For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, speak to a Cancer Council nurse on **13 11 20**.  
Calls are confidential and available statewide  
Monday to Friday during business hours.

# Breast awareness for all women.



Women's  
cancers

**13 11 20**  
Cancer Council



## Be breast aware

Our breasts change throughout our lives. Being aware of the changes and learning how your breasts feel at different times will help you understand what is normal for you. If you are familiar with your breasts you may be more likely to notice any unusual changes that could be a sign of breast cancer.

### To be breast aware:

1. Get to know your breasts and what is normal for you by looking at them and feeling them.
2. See a doctor or health worker if you notice any unusual changes.
3. If you are aged 50-74, have a free mammogram (breast x-ray) at BreastScreen WA every two years.

### Get to know your breasts

Get to know your breasts, and what is normal for you. What do they look and feel like?

- Look in the mirror, and feel your breasts from time to time.
- Feel them while you are in the shower or bath, lying in bed, or getting dressed. It should only take a few minutes.
- Remember to feel all the breast tissue, from the collarbone to below the bra-line, and under the armpit.

- Use the flat part of your fingers and the finger pads to feel near the surface, and deeper in the breast.

There is no right or wrong way to feel your breasts. These points are just suggestions. You may find a way that works better for you.

If you are still having your periods, expect your breasts to feel different at different times of the month. For example, it may be normal for your breasts to be painful, lumpier or swollen just before your period and softer after your period.

Women of all ages should become familiar with their breasts, but it becomes more important as you get older as the risk of breast cancer increases with age.

**Most breast changes are not breast cancer, however it is always important to have any changes checked out straight away by your doctor or health worker. Don't delay.**

### See your doctor or health worker if you notice any unusual breast changes

No matter how old you are, see your doctor or health worker straight away if you feel or see any of the following changes:

- A lump, lumpiness or thickening in the breast or armpit.
- Changes in the skin - dimpling, puckering or redness.

- Changes in the nipple - inversion, new nipple discharge, itchy, ulcerated skin.
- An area that feels different from the rest.
- New persistent pain.

Your doctor or health worker will examine your breasts and ask about your medical history. They can then arrange different tests to find out what has caused the breast change. You may be referred to have a mammogram, ultrasound and a biopsy. A biopsy involves taking cells from the breast for testing. Ask your doctor or health worker what has caused the change. If you don't understand, make sure you say so.

In most cases the breast change will not be breast cancer, but it is important to have it checked.

### Screening at BreastScreen WA

BreastScreen WA provides FREE screening mammograms to Western Australian women 40 years or over with no breast symptoms every two years.

Women aged 50 to 74 are personally invited to attend as the benefit from screening mammography is greatest for women in this age group.

Online bookings are available, search "book online breast screen WA" or phone **13 20 50**.

For more information about the BreastScreen WA screening program visit

**[breastscreen.health.wa.gov.au](http://breastscreen.health.wa.gov.au)**

