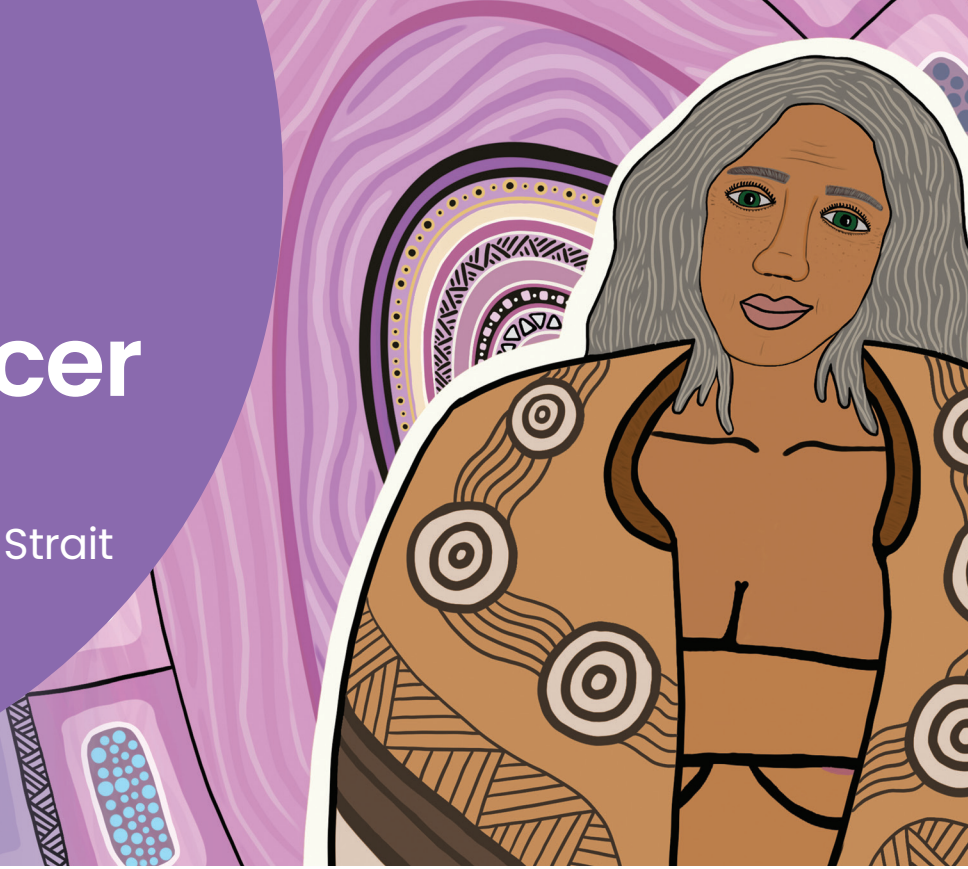


# Breast cancer fact sheet

for Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander women



Artist: Nakia Donald Gunditjmarra, Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung & Bunitj Title: Our health matters

In the spirit of unity and respect, BreastScreen Victoria acknowledges the First Peoples of these lands and waterways. We recognise their deep connection to the earth and the importance of holistic wellbeing as we embark on our shared journey of breast health.

## Breast cancer in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Victoria. If untreated, breast cancer can affect your health and wellbeing. Finding breast cancer early helps you stay strong and healthy for your family, culture, and community. Our program offers free, 10-minute breast screens (mammograms) that can find cancer when it is still too small to feel. The sooner cancer is found, the more successful treatment is likely to be. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 40 to 74 are encouraged to have a breast screen every 2 years.

## Breast cancer statistics 2025

Breast cancer is the **most common cancer** diagnosed among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Victoria<sup>1</sup>.

**245**

Out of every 100,000 women, 245 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 50 to 74 are diagnosed with breast cancer<sup>4</sup>.

**48**

There are 48 breast cancer deaths for every 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women<sup>4</sup>.

**81%**

The five-year relative survival rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with breast cancer is 81%<sup>5</sup>.

## Breast screening with us

Between 2023 and 2025:

- **2,715<sup>2</sup>** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 50 to 74 attended a breast screen
- This represents **44.8%<sup>2</sup>** of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women invited to screen

During this period, **538** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 40 to 49 also attended a breast screen.

From July 2025 to June 2026, **325<sup>3</sup>** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were screened through the Beautiful Shawl Project, which provides a culturally safe and welcoming screening experience.

## Creating a safe and welcoming environment

We want all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to feel safe and respected in our clinics. We understand that some people may feel uncertain or have concerns about healthcare services. Our Reconciliation Action Plan demonstrates our roadmap to building trust and providing culturally respectful care.

For more details, see our Reconciliation Action Plan at [breastscreen.org.au/RAP](https://breastscreen.org.au/RAP).

## Be aware of risk factors

Several factors can increase the risk of breast cancer:

### Age

Age is the biggest risk factor for breast cancer. Over 62%<sup>4</sup> of breast cancers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are diagnosed between ages 50 and 74.

## Family history

Most breast cancers aren't genetic, but family history can increase risk. Your risk may be higher if:

- More than one close relative on the same side of your family (mother's or father's) has had breast cancer.
- Relatives were diagnosed young (under age 50) or were immediate family (for example, your sister rather than cousin).
- A male family member has been diagnosed with breast cancer.
- Both breast and ovarian cancers are present in your family.

## Lifestyle factors

Certain lifestyle factors increase the risk of breast cancer:

**Weight:** Being overweight or obese can increase the risk, especially after menopause.

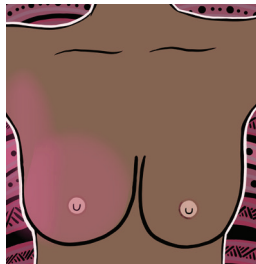
**Lifestyle:** Smoking, poor nutrition, and lack of exercise are proven to increase the risk of breast cancer. Making healthy gradual changes can help improve your overall health.

## Be breast aware

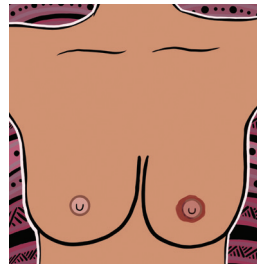
Breast cancer can develop at any time, so it's important to know what's normal for your body. Even if you have a breast screen every 2 years, get familiar with how your breasts look and feel. If you notice any unusual changes, such as a new lump, discharge from the nipple, redness, or pain, see your doctor as soon as possible.



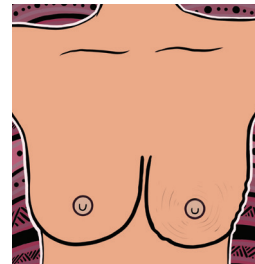
A new lump or lumpiness, especially if it's only in one breast, or a change in the arm/armpit, such as lymph node swelling.



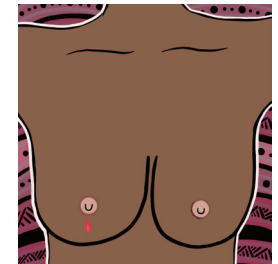
An unusual pain that does not go away.



A change to the nipple such as crusting, redness or inversion (pulled in).



A change in the size or shape of the breasts, or a change in the skin, such as puckering, dimpling, redness or tenderness.



A nipple discharge (liquid) that occurs without squeezing.

### Sources:

1. [Aboriginal Victorians Statistics - Cancer Council Victoria](#)
2. [BreastScreen Victoria Participation Data 2023-2025](#)
3. [Beautiful Shawl Project Participation Data 2025-2026](#)
4. [BreastScreen Australia monitoring report 2025 \(ecu.edu.au\)](#)
5. [Cancer in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people of Australia, Survival - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)

## Book a breast screen

We recommend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 40 to 74 without breast symptoms have a free, 10-minute breast screen every 2 years. If you're unsure about screening, an Aboriginal Health Worker, doctor, or nurse can help answer questions.

You are welcome to bring a friend, family member, or Elder to your appointment for support. Booking an appointment is easy; just call [13 20 50](tel:132050) or visit [breastscreen.org.au](https://breastscreen.org.au).



## BreastScreen Victoria

13 20 50

[www.breastscreen.org.au](https://www.breastscreen.org.au)



For more information or to change your details, visit [breastscreen.org.au](https://breastscreen.org.au) or call **13 20 50**

**TTY 13 36 77** if you have hearing or speech difficulties