

Breast microcalcifications

This document includes information about breast microcalcifications.

What are breast calcifications?

Breast calcifications are calcium deposits within breast tissue. There are two types of breast calcifications: macro and micro.

Macrocalcifications are small, typically benign (non-cancerous) calcium deposits that show up on a breast screen as large white spots. Having macrocalcifications does not increase your risk of developing breast cancer.

Microcalcifications are tiny calcium deposits that show up on breast screens like a sprinkling of salt. In some cases, microcalcifications can be the very earliest signs of pre-cancer.

How do calcifications form?

Breast calcifications are very common and develop naturally in breast tissue as you age.

Sometimes, calcifications form because of other changes in the breast, such as a fibroadenoma or breast cyst. They can also form if you have had breast surgery, implants or an infection or injury to the breast. Calcifications are not caused by the amount of calcium you consume in your diet.

How do you find microcalcifications?

Microcalcifications are too small to see or feel and they do not cause pain. However, they are visible on breast screens (mammograms).

When you have a breast screen, your x-ray images will be reviewed by two or more health professionals who will be able to spot any microcalcifications.

What does it mean if I have microcalcifications?

Our doctors will classify all microcalcifications as either looking benign, indeterminate (uncertain) or suspicious. Most microcalcifications are not cancerous. However, occasionally indeterminate or suspicious microcalcifications may be a sign of cell changes in the breast tissue. This can be an early sign of pre-cancer.

What if my microcalcifications look indeterminate or suspicious?

If your microcalcifications look indeterminate or suspicious, we will ask you to come back for further tests. This is because your breast screen alone may not give us enough information. We refer to this process as assessment.

What tests will I need?

We may perform an advanced type of mammogram to get a more detailed view of the breast area that requires investigation. This is called 3D mammography or tomosynthesis. It takes a number of x-ray images from different angles and reconstructs them to create a 3D image.

A doctor at the assessment clinic will review your 3D x-ray images and any other tests. They will then decide whether a pathologist should examine your breast tissue in more detail through a test known as a biopsy. If we recommend a biopsy, we will explain this to you and provide more information. It can be performed during the same appointment.

When will I get my results?

In most cases, we will be able to deliver your results on the day of your assessment visit. However, biopsy results may take up to 1 week. We will contact you for a follow-up appointment if we need to discuss your biopsy results.

Book at breastscreen.org.au
or call 13 20 50



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