

# Breast screening with a family history of breast cancer

This document includes information about what it means to have a family history of breast and ovarian cancer. It also describes how your family history helps us to provide better care.

## Am I at risk?

1 in 7 women in Victoria will develop breast cancer in their lifetime.



Most people with breast cancer do not have a family history of the disease.



Ageing is the biggest risk factor for developing breast cancer.



## What does it mean if I have a family history of breast and ovarian cancer?

You have a family history of breast and ovarian cancer if any of your blood relatives have had breast or ovarian cancer. Having a family history does not mean you will develop breast cancer.

## Why does my family history matter?


Understanding your family history of breast cancer may help us to identify your risk. Most breast cancers are not caused by genetic factors. However, for a small number of people with a family history, breast cancer may be due to a gene change that increases the risk of cancer.


## When is my family history most important?


The following are examples of when your family history is most important:

- More than one relative on the same side of your family (mother's or father's side) is diagnosed with breast cancer
- A family member is diagnosed with breast cancer under 50 years of age and is your close relative (for example your sister, rather than your cousin)
- A man in your family is diagnosed with breast cancer
- A family member has breast cancer in both breasts
- You have a family history of both breast and ovarian cancer

## Of 100 Australian women:

 95 women are at average risk (population risk) of developing breast cancer.

 4 women are at a moderately increased risk of developing breast cancer.

 1 woman is at a potentially high risk of developing breast cancer.

Source: BCI Westmead Breast Cancer Institute

## How often should I have a breast screen?

This table shows the different breast cancer risk levels and recommended breast screening intervals. We invite eligible Victorians to have a free breast screen (mammogram) according to the recommendation that matches their family history.

Risk level		Recommended breast screening interval
<b>Average risk</b>	Risk is similar to other women of the same age. 1 in 7 chance of developing breast cancer.	Aged 50 to 74 Breast screen every 2 years
<b>Moderately increased risk</b>	Risk of developing breast cancer by the age of 75 is between a 1 in 7 chance and a 1 in 4 chance. If you are in this category, you may wish to discuss your circumstances with your doctor.	Aged 40 to 49 Breast screen every 1 year  Aged 50 to 74 Breast screen every 2 years
<b>Potentially high risk</b>	Risk of developing breast cancer by the age of 75 is more than a 1 in 4 chance. Women with a potentially high risk may need additional care that is not part of the BreastScreen Victoria program. If you are in this category, we recommend you see your doctor for a clinical assessment. If you decide to continue screening with BreastScreen Victoria, please follow our recommended screening interval.	Aged 40 to 59 Breast screen every 1 year  Aged 60 to 74 Breast screen every 2 years

Note: Trans and gender diverse people can have a unique set of factors that may impact their eligibility and breast cancer risk. If you identify as trans and gender diverse, we recommend talking to your doctor about your personal risk factors and whether you should have breast screens.

## How do you assess my risk?

We collect information about your family history so we can provide you with better care. When you book your breast screen appointment, we will ask questions about your family history of breast and ovarian cancer. We use this information to estimate your personal risk level of developing breast cancer, along with other factors that may decrease or increase your risk. If you report a family history of breast and ovarian cancer but we consider you to be at average risk, we will explain this in your results letter. If we find that you are at a higher-than-average risk, we will tell you what this means and explain the next steps.

## What should I do if I have concerns?

If you are concerned about your family history of breast and ovarian cancer, we recommend you speak to your doctor. They may use a familial risk assessment tool to provide a more complete evaluation of your breast cancer risk. It is important that you inform us if any new cases of breast cancer are diagnosed in your family.

## Be breast aware

Whether or not you have regular breast screens, it is important to be breast aware because breast cancer can develop at any time.

We recommend you get to know the normal look and feel of your breasts. If you notice any changes to your breasts, such as a new lump, nipple discharge or redness, see your doctor as soon as possible.

## Further information

**BreastScreen Victoria:** [13 20 50](tel:132050)

**Cancer Council Information and Support Service:** [13 11 20](tel:131120)  
([13 14 50](tel:131450) for other languages)

**Cancer Council Victoria:** [cancervic.org.au](http://cancervic.org.au)

**Cancer Australia:** [canceraustralia.gov.au](http://canceraustralia.gov.au)

Book at  
**[breastscreen.org.au](http://breastscreen.org.au)**  
or call **13 20 50**

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



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



For interpreter assistance, call **13 14 50**



Translated information:  
**[breastscreen.org.au/translations](http://breastscreen.org.au/translations)**



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