

Your breast screening guide



Book a free 10 minute breast screen
online at breastscreen.org.au
or call 13 20 50

Before your screen



- Plan your trip and arrive early to complete final ID checks.
- Complete the consent and registration form, read information provided about your breast screen appointment.



At your screen



- You will be asked to remove your top and bra. A gown is available if you'd like to wear one.
- The machine will press firmly on your breasts to take the x-ray images.



After your screen



- We will send your results in 2 to 4 weeks.
- Avoid travel for 6 weeks after your breast screen in case you need to return for further tests.



2 years later



- You will receive a reminder to book your next screen.

Our program



Is free



Is with a woman radiographer



Takes about 10 minutes



Does not require a doctor's referral



Is available across Victoria

Why screening is important?

Breast screening is important because it helps detect breast cancer early, often before any symptoms appear. Finding cancer at an early stage increases the chances of successful treatment, may require less invasive care, and can reduce the risk of death.



Before your breast screen



Who is BreastScreen Victoria?

BreastScreen Victoria is an accredited part of BreastScreen Australia – the national screening program for breast cancer. We invite Victorians aged 50 to 74 without breast symptoms to have a free breast screen (mammogram) every 2 years. Women aged 40 to 49 and over 74 can also screen for free. However, we recommend speaking with a doctor to confirm if breast screening is the right option depending on individual health factors.

What is a breast screen?

A breast screen is a low-dose x-ray of the breast, recommended every 2 years from age 50 to 74 years old. At BreastScreen Victoria, we will typically take two x-ray images of each breast – one from the top and one from the side. Breast screens can find cancers that are too small to feel. The sooner cancer is found, the more successful treatment is likely to be.

Are breast screens safe?

Each time you have a breast screen, your breasts are exposed to a very small amount of radiation. Research shows that the benefits of breast screens in finding cancer early outweigh any radiation risks.

What if I notice changes to my breasts?

It is important to 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 a doctor as soon as possible. Please do not visit BreastScreen Victoria.

Will I need to bring my previous breast x-ray images?

If your most recent breast screen was completed outside our program, we will request those images from the provider with your consent. It is important that we have a copy of your previous breast x-ray images so we can compare them and make sure there have been no important changes.

Will I need to share my family history?

We collect information about your family history of breast and ovarian cancer so that we can estimate your personal risk of developing breast cancer.

Before completing your registration form, please talk to your family about your family history. For more information, go to breastscreen.org.au/family-history.

What if I have breast implants?

Most people with implants can have breast screens. Please read the fact sheet titled *Breast screening with implants* at breastscreen.org.au/breastimplants.

We will not advise you about problems with your implants. If you notice an issue or are concerned about your implants, please see a doctor as soon as possible.

What should I wear to my appointment?

Wear two separate pieces of clothing, like a top with a skirt or trousers, so you can remove just the top when needed, without having to change completely. Please wear minimal jewellery. If you have long hair, please bring a hair tie or wear your hair up.

What if I am planning to travel shortly after my breast screen?

We ask that you avoid all travel for at least 6 weeks after your breast screen appointment in case you are asked to return for further tests.





At your breast screen

What will happen at my appointment?

A receptionist will welcome you and confirm your details. Once your details are confirmed, a woman radiographer will take you to the mammography room. The radiographer will explain the test. You will then be asked to remove your top and bra. A gown is available if you'd like to wear one.

The radiographer will position you for your breast screen, which requires her to touch your breasts and adjust your body to ensure each breast is in the right position to take clear images. Two images of each breast are taken from the side angle and from the top. Additional images may be required.

Can I talk to the radiographer?

You are welcome to talk to the radiographer at any time during your appointment. They will be happy to answer any questions or address any concerns you may have.

Will the breast screen hurt?

It is normal to feel discomfort during your breast screen, but this should only last a few seconds. This is because your breasts need to be pressed firmly between two plates on the mammogram machine so that we can take clear x-ray images. Please tell your radiographer if you feel any pain. They will work with you to make sure that your breast screen is as comfortable as possible. You can ask for the breast screen to stop at any time.

Will you need to compress my breasts?

There are several important reasons why we must compress your breasts during a breast screen. Compression holds the breasts still and reduces motion, spreading and separating the breast tissue so that we can take clear x-ray images. It also decreases the amount of radiation required for each x-ray image.

After your breast screen



When will I get my results?

Your breast x-ray images will be independently reviewed at least twice. If you participate in our reading trial, your images may be reviewed by software plus at least one specially trained doctor (radiologist). Results will take 2 to 4 weeks. A copy will be sent to your nominated doctor. You will receive a reminder for your next appointment.

Will I be asked to come back for more tests?

We may ask you to come back for more tests if there is an area on your breast x-ray images that needs further investigation. Most clients who are called back do not have breast cancer. If it is your first breast screen, you are more likely to be called back as we will not have any x-ray images on record to compare against.

Where will I need to go for more tests?

Further tests may be performed at a different location to your initial breast screen appointment. We have specialised assessment clinics across the state, equipped with technology to perform any additional tests required.

Will a breast screen find all cancers?

Breast screens are the best way to find breast cancer at an early stage. However, they are not 100% accurate. There is a small chance that breast x-ray images will look normal even if breast cancer is present.

Will I be told my breast density?

Yes, you will be notified of your breast density category with your results.

For more information about breast density visit breastscreen.org.au/breastdensity or call **13 20 50** to request a fact sheet.



2 years later



What happens when my next breast screen is due?

A breast screen every 2 years between age 50 to 74 is the best way to find breast cancer early. We will send you a reminder when your next breast screen is due. If you are aged 40 to 49 and over 74 you will not receive reminders, so please make sure this information is captured in a way that works best for you.

What should I do between breast screens?

Breast cancer can develop at any time. Even if you have a breast screen every 2 years, it is important that you get to know the normal look and feel of your breasts through regular self checks. If you see any unusual changes to your breasts, such as new lump, nipple discharge, redness or pain that doesn't go away, see a doctor immediately.

To learn more, visit our breast symptoms resource at breastscreen.org.au/breastsymptoms.



What happens if further tests are needed?



Why have I been asked to come back for further tests?

We have asked you to come back for more tests because there is an area on your breast screen (mammogram) that needs further investigation. This is part of our assessment process.

We have several assessment clinics across the state. It is likely that your assessment clinic will be different to the clinic you attended to have your breast screen.

Most clients who are called back for further tests do not have breast cancer.

Is there a cost involved with further tests?

All tests conducted within the program are free.

Who can I talk to before my appointment?

You can speak to a trained nurse counsellor before your appointment.

We include the relevant phone number in our correspondence.

What will happen at my appointment?

On arrival, you will be met by a team member who will explain the process.

You will be asked to read and sign a consent form, so the team can perform the necessary tests required.

A team of specialists will assess the area of your breast that needs investigation.

The assessment team will support you throughout your visit and address any questions you may have.

How long will my appointment take?

Please allow up to half a day for your appointment. We can also provide an attendance certificate for your workplace.

What tests will I need?

You will need some or all of the following tests:

3D Mammograms:

We use an advanced type of mammography to get a more detailed view of the breast area that requires investigation. This is called 3D mammography or tomosynthesis. 3D Mammography takes a number of x-ray images (usually 11-25) from different angles and reconstructs them to create a 3D image.

Breast ultrasound:

We may use ultrasound to see your breast tissue in more detail. To take an ultrasound, we apply gel to the breast and hold a probe against your skin. Ultrasounds should not be painful or uncomfortable.

Breast examination:

A doctor may check for any changes in the breast that they can see or feel.

Breast core biopsy:

A doctor may use a needle to take a small sample of cells or tissue from the part of the breast that needs further investigation. More information will be given to you at the time if you require a biopsy.

Please discuss any concerns with our team.

What are my choices?

You may withdraw your consent and ask to stop the tests at any time.

When will I get my results?

In most cases, we will be able to deliver your results on the day of your visit. However, biopsy results may take up to 1 week.

We will also send a copy of your results to your doctor.

What happens next?

If we find no signs of breast cancer, we will invite you to return for a breast screen in 2 years.

We diagnose a small number of clients with breast cancer and if we find breast cancer, we will arrange for you to meet with a doctor and nurse counsellor to discuss the findings and next steps.

We will then refer you back to your regular doctor who will arrange your ongoing care.

Most breast cancers found are at an early stage. The sooner cancer is detected, the more successful treatment is likely to be.

For more information, visit breastscreen.org.au.

Your privacy



At BreastScreen Victoria, we use the information you provide and your test results to screen for breast cancer and send reminders when you are next due to screen. Only authorised people have access to your information. We will only use or release information that identifies you with your consent, or where we are required to do so by law. Access to your information for research will only be provided with ethical approval. Go to breastscreen.org.au/privacy.



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



Scan to listen:
Behind the Screen
podcast



Hearing or speech difficulties **TTY 13 36 77**



Interpreter support **13 14 50**



Translated information:
breastscreen.org.au/translations



BreastScreen Victoria acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.