

# Is BreastScreen for you?



BreastScreen  
Victoria

Caring about Women

This information is about screening for breast cancer.

## Who is BreastScreen Victoria?

BreastScreen Victoria is part of BreastScreen Australia, the national screening program for breast cancer. BreastScreen Victoria invites women aged 50-74 who do not have breast symptoms for a free breast screen every two years. BreastScreen Victoria is a free service and you don't need a doctor's referral. Clinics are located all over Victoria, so you can attend one that is most convenient for you.

## What is a breast screen?

A breast screen is an X-ray picture of the breast (also called a mammogram). Breast screens can find cancers that are too small to see or feel. The earlier breast cancer is found the better the chance of a positive outcome. For women aged 50-74, breast screening is proven to save lives.

## Why am I being invited to screen?

Women 50-74 years are invited to screen every two years. This is because the evidence of benefit is strongest in this age group. Women under 40 are not eligible to attend BreastScreen Victoria because screening is not effective for this age group. For more information on your age group, visit [breastscreen.org.au](http://breastscreen.org.au).

Women in their 40s and over 74 are encouraged to discuss the benefits and risks of screening in the context of their individual health needs with their doctor.



## Is breast screening right for me?

Every woman needs to make their own decision about breast screening. For more information about benefits and harms of screening visit [breastscreen.org.au](http://breastscreen.org.au).

Some women may need different care and services that are not part of screening. If you have:

- an **unusual change** in your breast such as a lump, pain or nipple discharge
- a **strong family history** of breast and/or ovarian cancer
- had **breast cancer** within the past five years

you may not be eligible for BreastScreen Victoria and should see your doctor.

Women with breast implants are welcome to attend. Please advise our staff when making your appointment if you have breast implants.

## Am I at risk?

**1 in 9** women in Victoria will develop breast cancer in their lifetime.



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



**Getting older** is the biggest risk factor for developing breast cancer.



## What happens at BreastScreen?

Having a breast screen takes only 10 minutes. Please visit [breastscreen.org.au](http://breastscreen.org.au) to view a video of this simple procedure and for more information about what happens at BreastScreen.

Your X-rays will be looked at by at least two health professionals specially trained in breast screening. Your results will be mailed to you and your doctor with your consent.

## How often should I be screened?

BreastScreen Victoria recommends that women aged 50-74 have a breast screen once every two years. It is important to come back every two years so we can identify any changes.

## Are breast screens safe?

Each time you have a breast screen, your breasts are exposed to a very small amount of radiation. The radiation from screening is about the same as 18 weeks of exposure to natural radiation in the environment. Research shows that the benefits of breast screens in finding cancer early outweigh any radiation risks.

## Will it hurt?

During a breast screen it is normal to feel discomfort, but this should only last a few seconds. This is because your breasts need to be pressed firmly between two plates in the screening machine so that a clear picture can be taken. Please tell your radiographer if you feel any pain as the procedure can be paused at any time.

## How can I stay breast aware?

Even if you have two-yearly 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 and see your doctor immediately if you notice any unusual changes, such as lumps, pain or nipple discharge, even if your breast screen result has been normal.
- Ask your doctor about your risk of breast cancer and the need for breast cancer screening.

## What are the limitations of screening?

Breast screening is currently the most reliable means of detecting breast cancer but it is not perfect. There is a small chance that a breast screen will look normal, even if a breast cancer is present. A very small number of women are diagnosed with breast cancer between breast screens.

Some women will be called back for more tests after a breast screen because the X-ray picture showed an abnormality. Most women who are recalled will not have cancer.

Some women who have screening will be diagnosed and treated for breast cancer that would never have caused them harm. This is known as overdiagnosis. As we cannot tell which breast cancers may become life threatening, all women diagnosed with breast cancer are offered treatment.

## It's your choice

Breast screening is your choice ... and every woman is different. To help you make an informed choice on whether or not screening is for you, visit [breastscreen.org.au](http://breastscreen.org.au) or talk to your doctor.

### Breast screening

 is **free**

 takes about **10 minutes**

 doesn't need a **doctor's referral**

 is provided by **female radiographers**

 is available at a clinic near you **throughout Victoria**

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



For more information: [breastscreen.org.au](http://breastscreen.org.au)



Call **13 14 50** and ask to be connected to BreastScreen Victoria



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

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



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