

### How often should I be screened?

A breast screen is recommended once every two years and is a good way of looking after your health.

### What if I have breast symptoms or changes?

If you have noticed an unusual change in your breasts such as a lump, pain or discharge from the nipple, it is important that you visit your doctor as soon as possible, *before your appointment at BreastScreen Victoria*. If you have had breast cancer in the past you are advised to see your doctor or breast specialist as BreastScreen Victoria may not be suitable for your particular needs.

### Further information about breast health for all women is available from:

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

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

Cancer Council Helpline  
PH 13 11 20



If you need an interpreter, please call the Translating and Interpreter Service (TIS) on 13 14 50 and ask to be connected to BreastScreen Victoria.

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



BreastScreen Victoria acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



BreastScreen  
Victoria

Caring about Women

# What happens at BreastScreen?



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### We welcome your feedback

Feedback helps BreastScreen Victoria to continually improve our service to women.

You can send your feedback by phoning **13 20 50** or email us at [info@breastscreen.org.au](mailto:info@breastscreen.org.au)

### **Welcome to BreastScreen Victoria**

A breast screen (simply a low-dose breast X-ray) is the best way of detecting breast cancer at its earliest stages. Early detection of breast cancer offers you the best chance of successful treatment and recovery. This brochure answers some of your questions about what will happen at your BreastScreen appointment.

### **What should I do before my BreastScreen appointment?**

Before your appointment we will send you an Information and Consent form to fill out. Please bring it with you to your appointment.

### **What should I wear to my appointment?**

Wear a skirt or slacks and a top, rather than a dress, as you'll need to undress from the waist up for the breast screen. A gown will be available if preferred.

### **What will happen at my appointment?**

You will be welcomed by a BreastScreen Victoria staff member who will collect your forms and explain what happens at the Screening Centre. A female radiographer will take you into the X-ray room. When you are ready and comfortable, the radiographer will take two X-rays of each breast. Each X-ray only takes a few seconds. The radiographer will then check that the pictures are not blurry and that all of your breast tissue is shown on the X-rays.

### **Can I talk to the radiographer?**

Yes. Communicating with your radiographer is important, especially if you have any concerns. Your radiographer will be happy to answer any questions.

### **Will it hurt?**

While the breast screen is being taken, each breast will be compressed between two flat plates on the X-ray machine. Compressing the breast only lasts for a few seconds. Some women may experience discomfort, however, if you experience pain during the breast screen, you should let the radiographer know. You can also ask for the procedure to stop at any time. We recommend that you advise your radiographer if you have sensitive breasts. She will work with you to make sure that the breast screen is as comfortable as possible.

### **Do we have to compress your breasts?**

Yes we do, but for very important reasons. Compression holds the breasts still so that we get a clear picture on the X-ray. Compression also spreads out and separates the breast tissue so that the radiologist (the specialist doctor who interprets X-rays) has a clearer view of the small details on your X-rays.

### **Are breast screens safe?**

The level of radiation from a breast screen is low – similar to that of many common X-rays. Current research shows that the benefits of regular breast screens outweigh any possible risks from radiation.

### **When will I get my results?**

Your results will be sent to you as soon as possible, usually within 2–6 weeks. Your GP will also receive a copy of your results if you have provided BreastScreen with his/her details. Most women will be relieved to find that there are no signs of breast cancer. Less than 1% of women who attend BreastScreen Victoria are found to have breast cancer.

### **What if I am called back for further tests?**

Some women will be asked to attend an Assessment Centre for further tests. This may be because there is an area on your breast that needs further investigation. Any further tests at an Assessment Centre are still part of BreastScreen Victoria's free service. Remember, most women called back for further tests do not have breast cancer.

### **Will a breast screen find all cancers?**

Breast screening is the most reliable way of detecting breast cancer, but like other medical tests, it is not perfect. Some cancers are not found on a breast screen. This can happen no matter how skilled the doctors reading the breast screen are. A very small number of women may be diagnosed with breast cancer between breast screens. If you notice any unusual breast change after your breast screen such as a lump, pain or discharge from the nipple, please visit your doctor without delay.

