



**BreastScreen
Aotearoa**



Screening for breast cancer: Joining BreastScreen Aotearoa



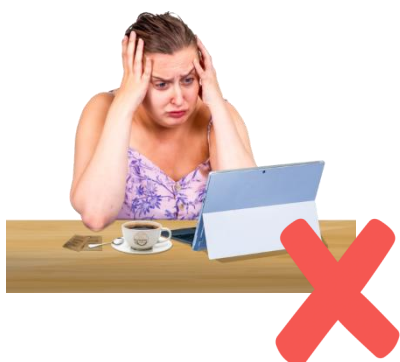
Published: November 2026

Before you start



Some of the information in this document may make people:

- upset
- worried.



This information is not meant to scare anyone.



This information does not mean the things in this document will happen to:

- you
- people you know.



If you are worried you can talk to your:

- whānau / family
- friends
- doctor.



This is also a long document.



It can be hard for some people to read a document this long.



Some things you can do to make it easier are:

- read it a few pages at a time
- set aside some quiet time to look at it
- have someone read it with you to support you to understand it.



What is in here

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About this Easy Read



This Easy Read has been made by
BreastScreen Aotearoa.



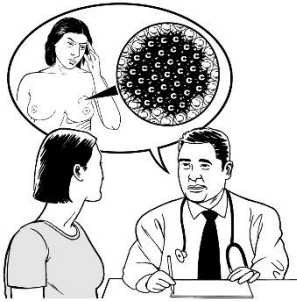
BreastScreen Aotearoa is a:

- national **screening** service to find **breast cancer**
- **free** service:
 - for women aged from 45 to 69 years old
 - to get a mammogram every 2 years

Our service will soon be free for women from 70 to 74 years old.



Here **screening** is a kind of test that looks for signs of **breast cancer**.



Breast cancer is a disease that makes people very sick.

Sometimes people can die from breast cancer.



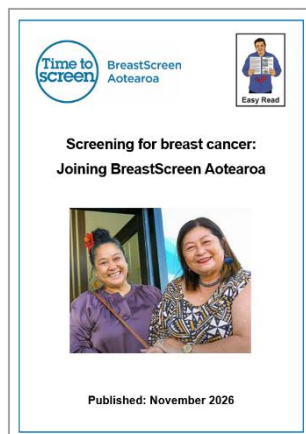
Free means it does not cost you money.



When you see the words **we / us / our** in this document it means BreastScreen Aotearoa.

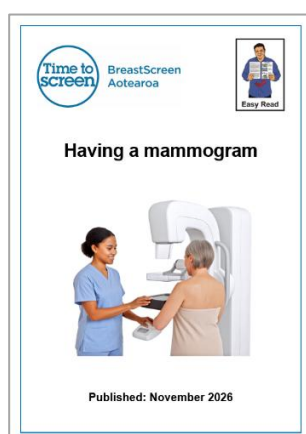


We use the word **BreastScreen** when talking about BreastScreen Aotearoa in this Easy Read document.



This Easy Read is called:

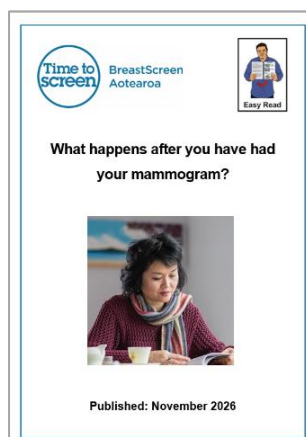
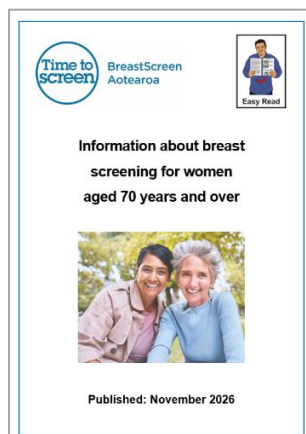
Screening for breast cancer: Joining BreastScreen Aotearoa



There are 3 other Easy Read documents that tell you about our services.

These Easy Reads are called:

- **Having a mammogram**
- **What happens after you have had your mammogram?**
- **Information about breast screening for women aged 70 years and over.**





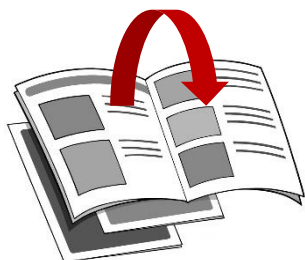
You can read these Easy Reads at
our **website**:

<https://healthed.govt.nz/>



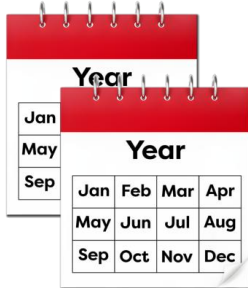
This Easy Read tells you about:

- why breast screening is important
- how to join BreastScreen Aotearoa.



Go to **pages 34 to 36** find out our
contact information.

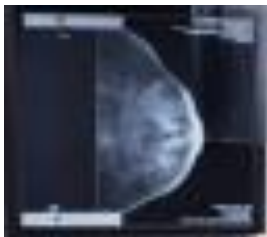
Breast screening and cancer



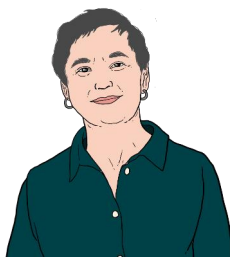
Breast screening means having a **mammogram** every 2 years to check for signs of breast cancer.



A **mammogram** is an **x-ray** of the inside of your breast.



Here an **x-ray** is a picture of inside your body.



Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in New Zealand.



Screening saves lives by finding breast cancers:

- early
- sometimes before there are any **symptoms**.



Here **symptoms** are things that happen to your body that show or tell you have something like breast cancer.



Most breast cancers can be cured if they are found early.

Finding breast cancers early can mean it can be treated before it grows bigger.

What is a mammogram?



A mammogram is an x-ray of the inside of your breast.



The x-ray pictures are given to 2 **radiologists**.



A **radiologist** is a doctor who knows a lot about how to look at x-rays.

During a mammogram each breast is pressed:

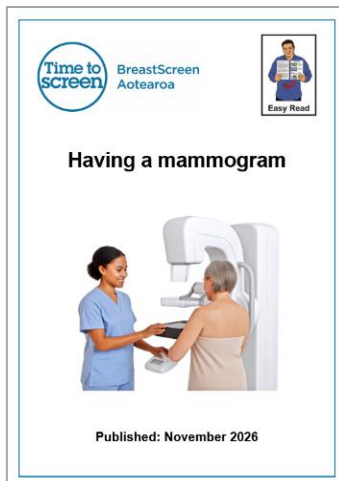


- firmly between 2 plates
- for about 1 minute to get clear x-rays.



The radiologists check the x-rays for signs of breast cancer.

Your mammogram is free.



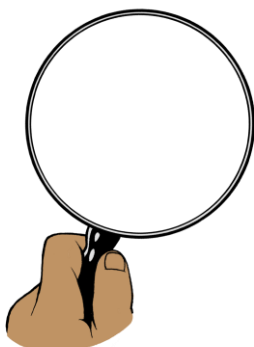
Read the Easy Read **Having a mammogram** to find out more information at this **website**:

<https://bit.ly/4ta9Mkx>



Having regular mammograms can **detect** cancer early.

Here **detect** means finding signs of breast cancer.



Early detection is your best protection.

Joining BreastScreen Aotearoa



If you are **eligible** you should get an invitation for a mammogram with us in:

- an email
- a text
- or
- letter.

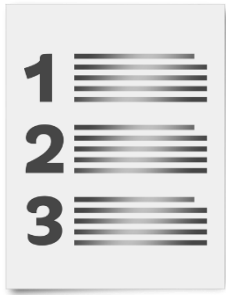


Here **eligible** means fitting the rules for who can get a mammogram at BreastScreen Aotearoa.

There will be a link in the invitation that only you can use in the:

- email
- text.





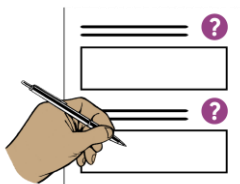
You can use the link to:

- **enrol** to our breast screening programme
- make an appointment to get your mammogram.



Here **enrol** means putting your name on a list at BreastScreen Aotearoa to get:

- your mammogram
- reminders about when you need to get a mammogram.

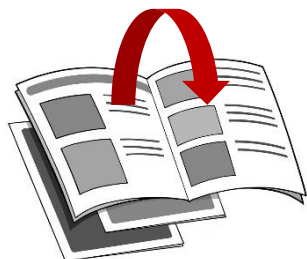


You can also enrol by completing an enrolment form at this **website**:

<https://bit.ly/3QnVs9t>



Please let us know if you have not received an invitation.

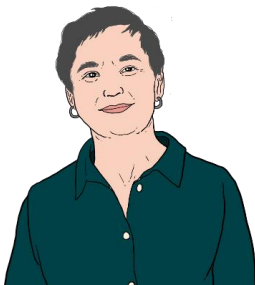


Go to **pages 34 to 36** for to find out how to contact us.

Are you eligible?



You are eligible to take part in BreastScreen Aotearoa if you can say yes to these things like if you:

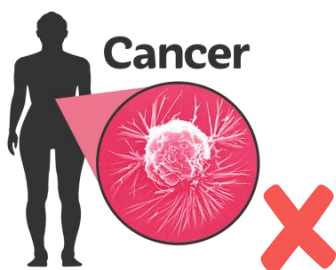


- are a woman:

- aged 45 to 69 years old

or

- will be eligible for the new age range up to 74 years old



- have no symptoms of breast cancer
- have not had a mammogram in the last 12 months
- are not pregnant / having a baby.

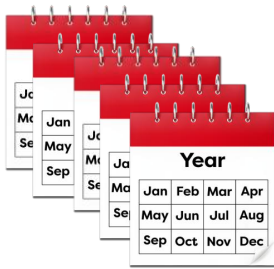




You are eligible to take part in BreastScreen Aotearoa if you can say yes to these things like if you:



- are entitled to / can get public health services in New Zealand



- have not had breast cancer for at least 5 years.



There is an online calculator to check your eligibility by your age.

This calculator is:



- not in alternate formats like Easy Read
- may not be **accessible**.

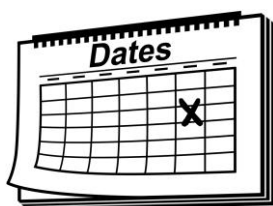


Accessible means that something can be used by everyone.



If you need support to use this calculator ask someone you trust like:

- a member of your whānau / family
- a friend
- your doctor.



The calculator is at this **website**:

<https://bit.ly/4sol4iM>



If you are not eligible to join BreastScreen Aotearoa talk with somebody about your risk of breast cancer like your:

- doctor / health provider
- hauora provider / Māori health provider.





You can check if you are eligible to get publicly funded / free:

- breast screening in New Zealand
- health and disability services here in New Zealand.



Find out at this **website**:

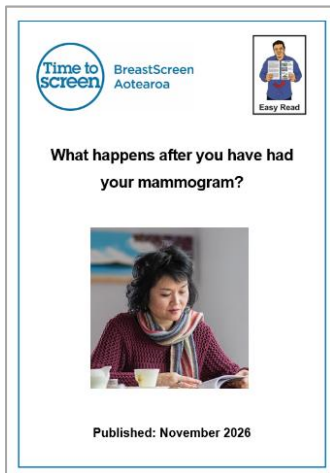
<https://bit.ly/4vwOSh1>



It is important for everybody to look for signs of breast cancer even if you are not eligible to take part in our programme.



If you notice / see any changes to your breasts talk to your healthcare provider as soon as you can.



You can find more information about breast health in an Easy Read called:

What happens after you have had your mammogram

You can find this Easy at this **website:**

<https://healthed.govt.nz/>



Extending the age for breast screening



BreastScreen Aotearoa is changing the age for free breast screening to include women aged from 70 to 74.



Extending means making something longer.



At the moment the eligible age for free mammograms is 45 to 69 years old.



Each October from 2025 the age range will be extended by 1 year until all eligible women aged 70 to 74 can get a free mammogram.



All eligible women will be able to get a free mammogram by 2029.



If you live in Nelson or Marlborough

From October 2024 if you live in Nelson or Marlborough you are eligible for:



- a free mammogram every 2 years until you turn 75 if you turned 70 on or after 1 October 2024
- 1 last breast screen at age 74 if you are 70 to 74 before 1 October 2024.



Find out more about these changes at this website:

<https://www.timetobreastscreen.nz>



If you live in most parts of New Zealand

This information is for you if you live in most parts of New Zealand except:



- Nelson
- Marlborough.



From October 2025 you are eligible for:



- a free mammogram every 2 years until you turn 75 if you turn 70:

- on 1 October 2025
- after 1 October 2025



- 1 last free breast screen at age 74 if you are 70 to 74 before 1 October 2025.

It is your choice



You can decide if you want to be in our breast screening programme at any time.



You can also decide if you do not want to be in our breast screening programme.



You can join again at any time if you are still **eligible**.



If you decide not to take part in our breast screening programme you can:

- still have your mammograms with a different service

but

- you may have to pay for them.



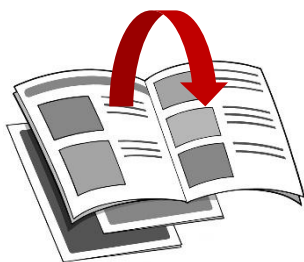


If you get your mammogram done somewhere else we will not have the information about these.



There is information to support you to make your decision at this **website**:

<https://www.timetobreastscreen.nz>



Go to **pages 34 to 36** to find out how to contact us.



There is support if you need it to:

- make your appointments
- go to your appointment.



There are Māori or Pacific providers in some areas who can support you to get your mammogram.



When you make your appointment for a mammogram tell them if you are breastfeeding.



Go to this **website** to find out about our Screening Support Services:

<https://bit.ly/41AfMqG>

Why screening is important



Screening saves lives.

Mammograms can find breast cancer early.



They can show changes inside the breast before you can feel anything.



If breast cancer is found early:

- treating the cancer may be easier
- you are less likely to die from it.



In New Zealand:

- women who found they have breast cancer through screening are less likely to die from it

than



- those who find breast cancer who are not in the screening programme.



Finding breast cancer early is the best way to stop you getting very sick from it.



There is more information about this at our **website**:

<https://bit.ly/4sCAAJe>



Most people who get breast cancer have no **family history** of it.



Here **family history** is when someone else in your family has had breast cancer like your:

- mother
- sister
- grandmother.



This is why it is important to:

- see your doctor / health provider if there any changes to your breasts
- have regular mammograms.



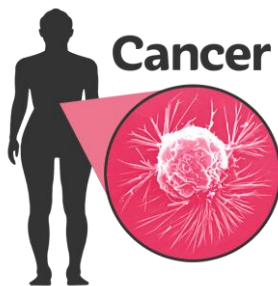
Your risk of getting breast cancer may be higher if you do have a family history of breast cancer.



The risk of getting breast cancer increases / gets bigger as you get older.



Early detection is the best way to protect you.



There are different ways to treat breast cancer.

Breast screening has been proven / shown to find breast cancer.



Most cancers are found for women having breast screening.



There are a few breast cancers that breast screening will not find.



It is still important to:

- look for any changes to your breasts between mammograms
- talk with your healthcare provider about any new changes as soon as you notice them.





For a few older women it may be better not to treat some cancers in a few women who:



- are older

and

- have very bad health problems.



This is because they will not harm them for the rest of their life.



It is not possible to know which cancers will grow to hurt you.



You can get treatment if cancer is found.



You can talk to your **specialist doctor**.



Here a **specialist doctor** is someone who knows a lot about:

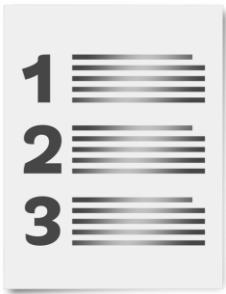
- breast cancer
- how to treat breast cancer.

More information



You can **call** us for more information about having a mammogram on:

0800 270 200



You can call us:

- to enrol
- to book your free mammogram when you are eligible for screening
- to change your appointment if you are eligible for screening
- to find out when we are open – each region has different opening hours.





If you find it hard to use the phone
the **New Zealand Relay** service is for
people who are:

- Deaf / hard of hearing
- deafblind
- speech impaired / find it hard to talk.



You can find out more about the New
Zealand Relay service at:

www.nzrelay.co.nz



You can also **email** us for more
information at:

screening@health.govt.nz



Visit our **website** to find out about support you can get if you need it at:

<https://bit.ly/4sol4iM>



For more information about where your nearest BreastScreen Aotearoa is visit this **website**:

<https://bit.ly/4mHEkYu>



This information has been written by BreastScreen Aotearoa.



It has been translated into Easy Read by the Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai service of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



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