Time to screen

BreastScreen Aotearoa

Easy Read

Having a mammogram

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 / health provider.

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

Page number:

About this Easy Read 5

What is a mammogram? 9

Time to screen BreastScreen Aotearoa

Where you can have a mammogram.....11

Before your mammogram 15

The day you have your mammogram.....19

Page number:

Having your mammogram.....28

Other things we need to know 35

When do you get your results? 40

More information 43

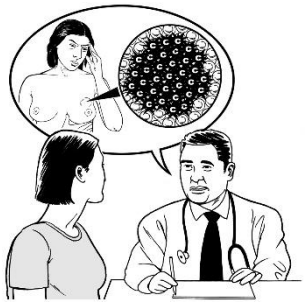
About this Easy Read

This Easy Read is from **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
- 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.

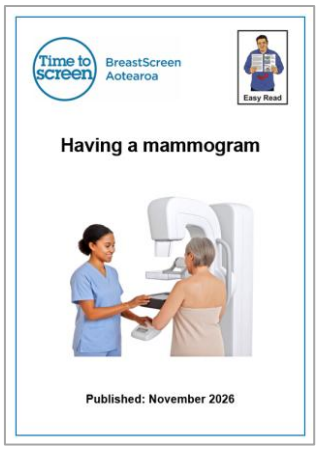
Sometimes people can die from breast cancer.

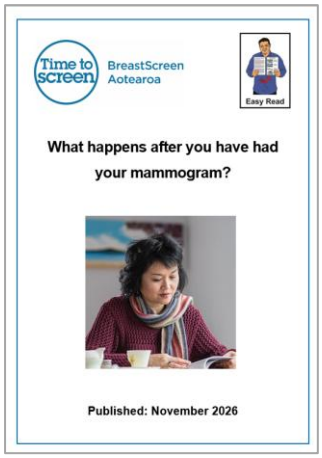
Free means it does not cost you money.

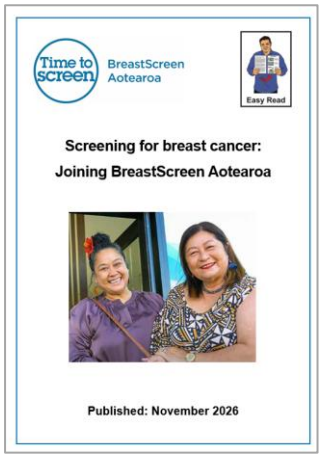
Time to screen BreastScreen Aotearoa

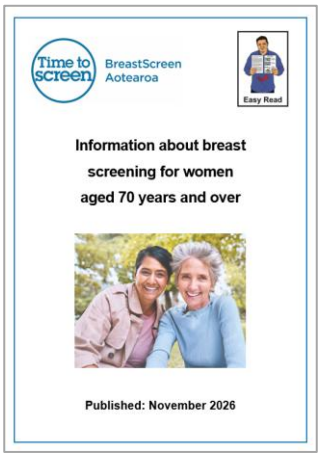
When you see the words **we / us / our** in this document it means BreastScreen Aotearoa.

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









This Easy Read is called:

Having a mammogram

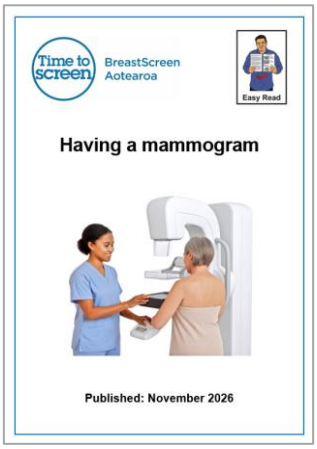
There are 3 other Easy Read documents that tell you about our services.

These Easy Reads are called:

- **What happens after you have had your mammogram**
- **Screening for breast cancer: Joining BreastScreen Aotearoa**
- **Information about breast screening for women aged 70 and over**.

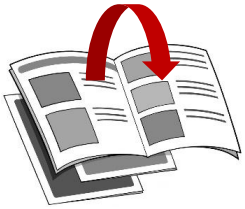
You can read these Easy Reads at this **website**:

https://healthed.govt.nz/



This Easy Read tells you about:

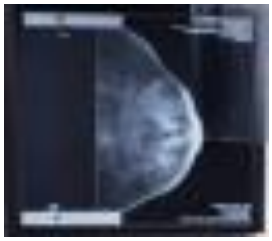
- what a mammogram is
- what you need to do to get ready to have a mammogram
- what happens when you have had your mammogram
- when you get the results of your mammogram.



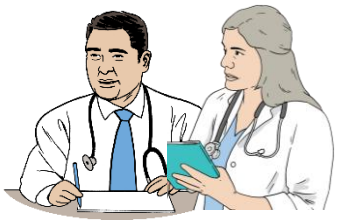
Go to **pages 43 to 45** to find out our contact information.

What is a mammogram?

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



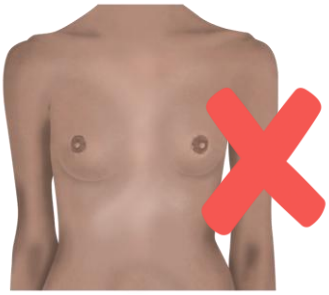
Here an **x-ray** is a picture of inside your body.



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.

The radiologists check for signs of breast cancer.



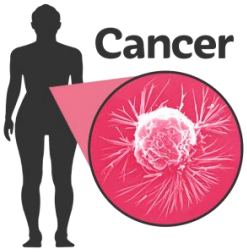
Your mammogram pictures are not checked for other health problems like if you are having problems with **breast implants**.

Breast implants are put into a breast to change the:

- size of the breast
- shape of the breast.

See your doctor right away if you notice any changes to your breasts.

Your mammogram is free.



Mammograms find most cancers that are there when the mammogram x-ray is taken.

Where you can have a mammogram

You can get your free mammogram at BreastScreen Aotearoa:

- clinics
- **mobile units**.

Here **mobile units** are small clinics on wheels.

Mobile units:

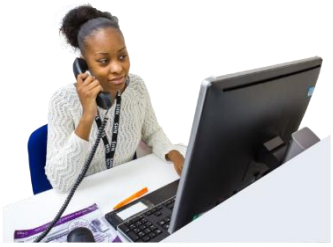
- have everything needed on them to be able to do mammograms
- can be driven to different places.

Most of these clinics are **accessible** for wheelchair users.

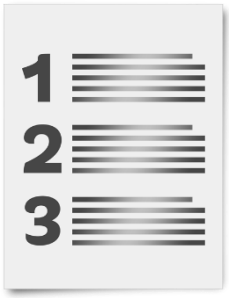
Here **accessible** means that wheelchair users can use the clinics.

You can call us for free to:

- find out which clinics / mobile units are accessible
- find the clinic / mobile unit closest to where you live.
- find out what days / date the mobile unit will be near you



- change where you want to go for your mammogram



- **enrol** if this is your first mammogram
- book your mammogram appointment.

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.

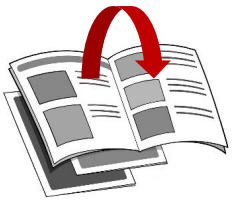
If you get an invitation for a breast screen by text there will be a link in the text.

You can click on the link to change the time of your screening appointment if you want to.

You can also call us if you need to change the:

- day of your mammogram
- time of your mammogram.

This call is free.



Go to **pages 43 to 45** to find out our contact information.

Before your mammogram

What do I do now?

Before you have your first mammogram you need to:

- **confirm your enrolment**

  and

- book / make your appointment.

Here **confirm your enrolment** means making sure:

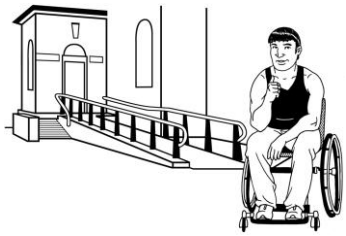
- you are on our enrolment list
- all the information we have about you is correct.

You can confirm your enrolment by:

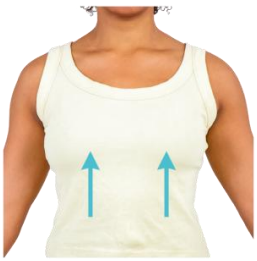
- using the link in the invitation you received by text
- calling us.

Before each appointment we will ask if you:

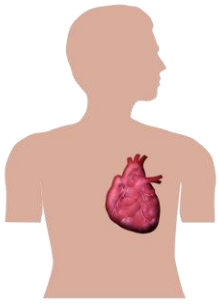
- have had a mammogram before
- need wheelchair access



- need a support person
- need an **interpreter**
- have problems moving your:
  - shoulders
  - arms



- have breast implants.



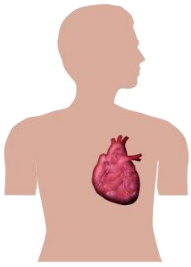
- have a device to support your heart like a pacemaker.

An **interpreter** is someone who can listen to:

- what you say in a different language like:
    - Te Reo Māori
    - New Zealand Sign Language

    and

- translate / say it in English



Before each appointment we will ask if you:

- have a device to support your heart like a pacemaker
- are breastfeeding.

You can give us the information we need by:

- using the link in the text invitation

or

- calling us.

Sometimes we may need to change your appointment to:

- make sure you get the access you need

- make a longer appointment time so we can meet your access needs.

The day you have your mammogram

Some things can make it harder to see cancers when we do your mammogram.

You can make it easier to get a clear x-ray by not using some things on your:

- breasts

or

- armpits

On the day of your mammogram do not use things like:

- deodorant
- talcum powder
- moisturiser
- sunscreen
- perfume
- creams.

Tell your **medical imaging technologist** if you have used something like this by mistake.

Here a **medical imaging technologist** is the person doing your mammogram.

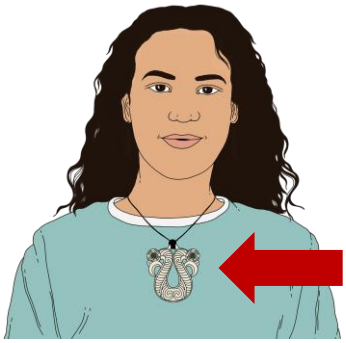
They will give you something to wipe it off.

What will happen when you have your mammogram?

You will be asked to take your clothes off from the waist up.

Please wear a top that is easy to take off like a:

- shirt
- jersey / jumper.



You can wear:

- your taonga

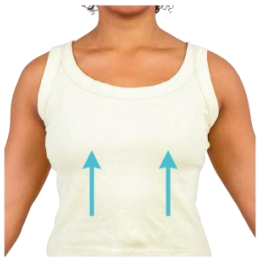
  but

- you may need to have it hanging down your back during your mammogram.

You may find it easier to take off your jewellery like necklaces when you are having your mammogram.

Other things you can bring or say

Bring your reading glasses in case you need them.



Tell the person taking the mammogram if you:

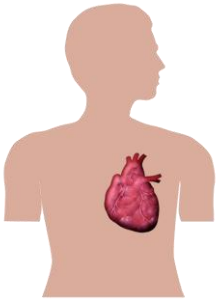
- have breast implants
- are breastfeeding
- are on:
    - **hormone replacement therapy / HRT**
    - **menopausal hormone therapy / MHT**.

Hormone replacement therapy / HRT is a kind of medicine used by some women when they are going through **menopause**.

Menopause is a change that happens to people who have periods.

During menopause your periods will stop.

Menopausal hormone therapy / MHT is also medicine used by some women when going through menopause.



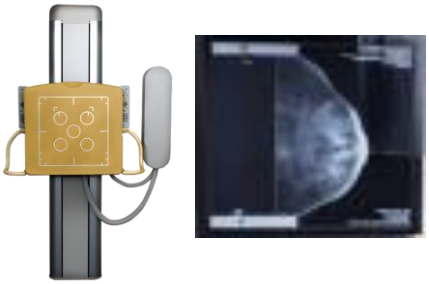
Tell the person taking the mammogram if you have a cardiac / heart device like a pacemaker.

Your appointment should take 20 to 30 minutes.

You may bring someone with you to your appointment like a:

- support person
- whānau / family member.

They will be asked to wait for you outside the room when you have your mammogram.



This is because x-rays are taken.

What happens when you arrive to have your mammogram?

First our receptionist will ask you:

- your name
- for information about you.

You may be asked to:

- read a digital form

and

- sign a digital form to agree to have a mammogram.

This form is **not** in Easy Read.

Your support person can fill the form out with you.

Your name will be called when the medical imaging technologist is ready to do your mammogram.

You will be asked to wear a:

- cape

  or

- gown.

You will then be taken to a private place to:

- take off your:
  - clothes from the waist up
  - bra if you are wearing one

- put on the the gown / cape given to you to cover yourself with.

You will go into the area where the mammogram machine is.

The medical imaging technologist will be in the room.

All our medical imaging technologists are women.

Talk to your medical imaging technologist if you have any:

- questions
- worries.

Having your mammogram

What will happen during a mammogram?

The medical imaging technologist will ask you to:

- stand close to the mammogram machine
- pull back your gown / covering so your breasts can have the mammogram taken.

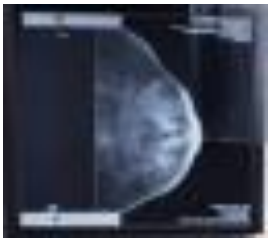
The medical imaging technologist will put one of your breasts between two plates on the machine.

They will move your breast around until it is in the right place.

The medical imaging technologist will bring the plates together to press your breast firmly between the plates.

This will take about 1 minute while they take an x-ray.

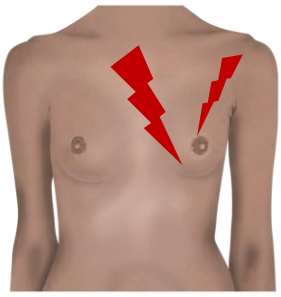
You will be asked to stand very still for up to 1 minute while 2 or more x-ray pictures are taken of your breast.



The medical imaging technologist will look at your x-rays to make sure they are clear.

They may need to change the position of your breast to get a clear x-ray.

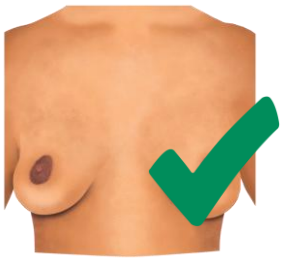
The medical imaging technologist will do the same thing for your other breast.



Does it hurt to have a mammogram?

You might find having your breast pressed firmly feels uncomfortable.

It does not harm your breasts.



The medical imaging technologist will try to make you comfortable.

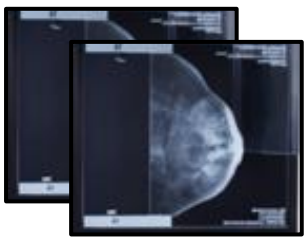
Tell your medical imaging technologist if you are feeling uncomfortable.

They will make you more comfortable.

You can ask for the mammogram to stop at any time.

A mammogram can x-ray breasts of all sizes.

It can be harder to get good x-ray pictures of large breasts.

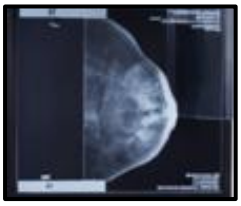


If you have big breasts the medical imaging technologist may need to:

- change the position of each breast more often
- take more x-ray pictures.

The medical imaging technologist will check the:

- position of your breast is correct in each x-ray
- x-ray is not blurry.



This means that your x-rays will be good to send to a radiologist.

The medical imaging technologist cannot check for cancer on the x-rays.

Only a radiologist can check your x-rays for cancer.

The medical imaging technologist will tell you when you can leave.

This happens when they have good x-ray pictures of your breasts.

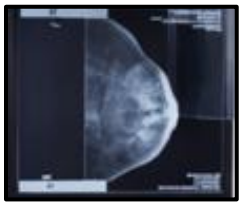
Then you can:

- get dressed
- leave to go home.

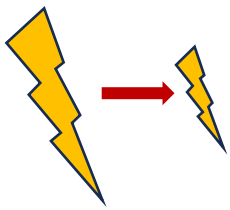
Why is it important to press the breasts firmly between the plates?

This makes the breast thinner.

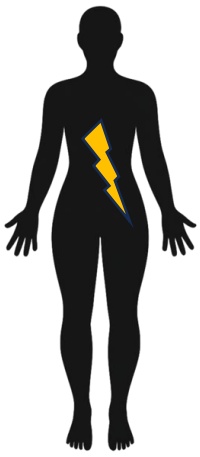
Making the breast thinner means it is easier for the x-ray to show very small details / things.



It also keeps the breast still to make a clear x-ray picture of the inside of your breast.



It also reduces how much **radiation** you will get.



Radiation is:

- an energy you cannot see that can travel through the soft parts of your body
- needed to make x-ray pictures.

Other things we need to know

Tell us about your family history

Women who have a **family history** of breast cancer have more of a chance of developing / getting the disease.

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

- mother
- sister
- grandmother.

Most women with a family history of breast cancer do not get breast cancer.

Most women who get breast cancer have no family history of breast cancer.

This is why it is important for everyone to:

- know their own breasts
- notice any changes to their breasts

- have regular mammograms every 2 years.

Tell us if you take hormone replacement therapy or menopausal replacement therapy

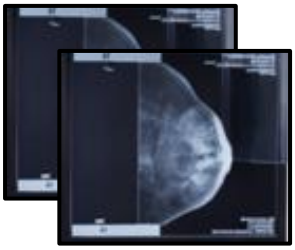
Taking hormone replacement therapy or menopausal replacement therapy can make it harder for an x-ray to show what is happening inside your breast.

Tell us if you have breast implants

Tell your medical imaging technologist if you have breast implants before you have your mammogram.

Implants can hide some of your breast tissue.

This makes it harder to find out if there is any cancer in your breasts.



We may need to take more x-rays than usual if you have breast implants.

There is also a very small chance a breast implant could be damaged during a mammogram.

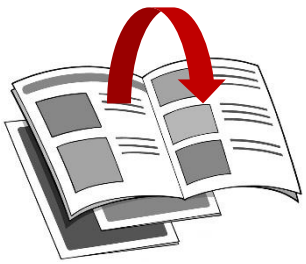
This is more likely to happen if you have had your implants for a long time.

For more information talk with your:

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

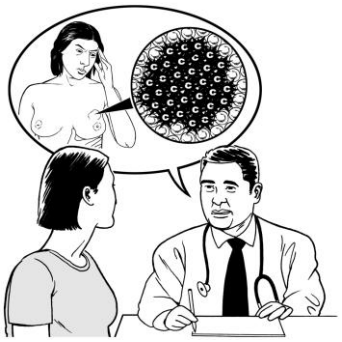
You can also contact us for more information.

Time to screen BreastScreen Aotearoa



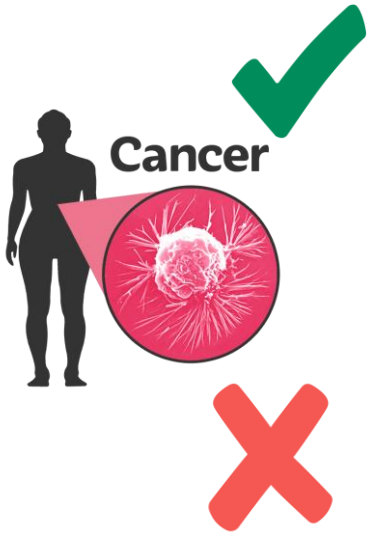
Go to **pages 43 to 45** to find out our contact information.

When do you get your results?



At least 2 radiologists will look at the x-ray pictures from your mammogram to check for signs of cancer.

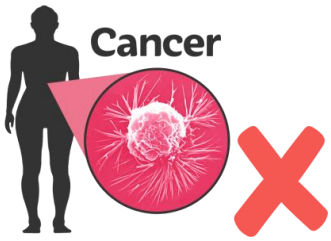
BreastScreen Aotearoa will contact you about your **results** in about 3 weeks after you have had your mammogram.



Here **results** means when we tell you if we:

- found something that needs a closer look
- did not find any signs you have breast cancer.

If we see something on your x-rays that needs a closer look we will tell you what you need to know about having more checks.



For most people having more checks does not mean they have cancer.

Your results will also be sent to your doctor / health provider.

You can tell us not to send your results to your doctor / health provider.

Sending your results supports your doctor / health provider to know what is happening about your health.

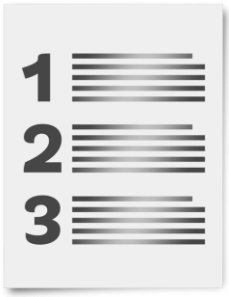
Please call us if you do not get your results.

Sometimes you may be asked to come back for another mammogram if the x-ray pictures are not clear enough.

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.

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

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.

The ideas in this document are not the ideas of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.

All images used in this Easy Read document are subject to copyright rules and cannot be used without permission.

Make it Easy uses images from:

- Photosymbols
- Change Images
- Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho
- SGC Image Works
- T Wood
- Studio Rebeko
- Inga Kramer.