



**BreastScreen
Aotearoa**



Information about breast screening for women aged 70 years and over



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

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About this Easy Read



This Easy Read has been made by
BreastScreen Aotearoa.



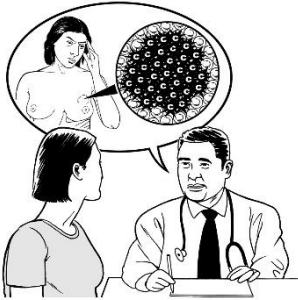
BreastScreen Aotearoa is a:

- 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.

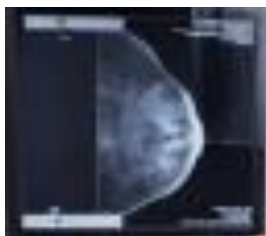
Sometimes people can die from breast cancer.



Free means it does not cost you money.



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



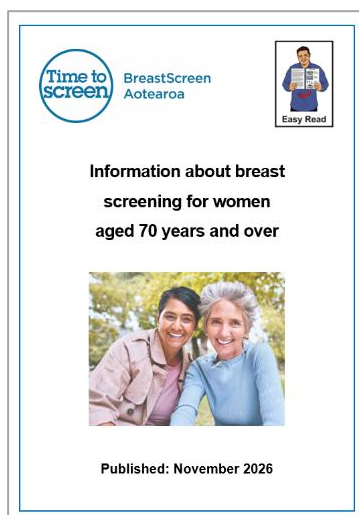
Here an **x-ray** is a picture of inside your body.



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



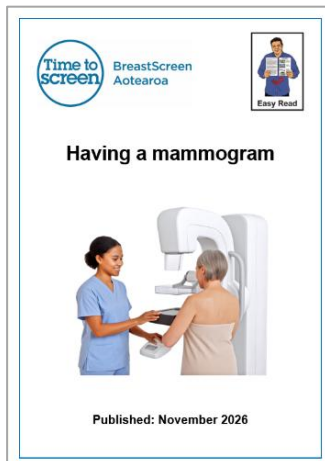
We use the word **BreastScreen** when talking about BreastScreen Aotearoa in this Easy Read document.



This Easy Read is called:

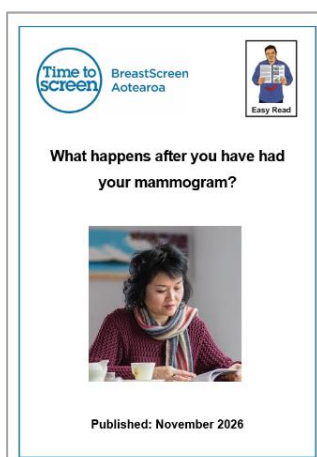
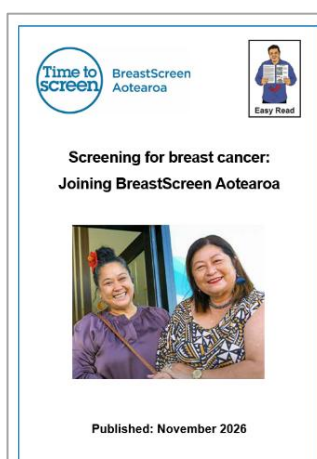
Information about breast screening for women aged 70 years and over

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



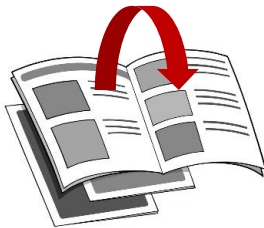
These Easy Reads are:

- **Having a mammogram**
- **What happens after you have had your mammogram?**
- **Screening for breast cancer: Joining Breastscreen Aotearoa.**



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

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



This Easy Read tells you about:

- extending the age for free breast screening
- what older women need to know about breast screening.

Here **extending** means making something longer.

Go to **pages 33 to 35** to find out our contact information.

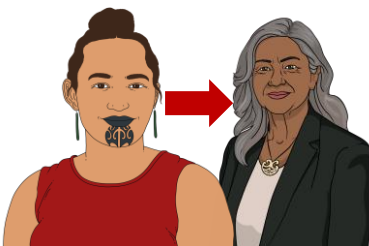
Extending the age for breast screening



BreastScreen Aotearoa is extending the age for free breast screening.



Soon women aged from 70 to 74 years old will also be able to get free mammograms.



Now the **eligible** age for free mammograms is 45 to 69 years old



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



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.





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 years old before 1 October 2025.





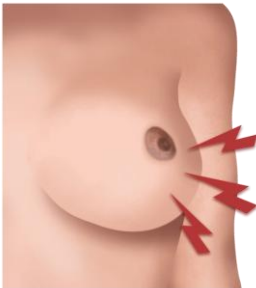
Find out more about these changes
at this website:

<https://www.timetobreastscreen.nz>

Things to know about mammograms



Mammograms can find breast cancer early before symptoms show.



Breast cancer symptoms can be things like a:

- new lump in your breast
- change in the shape of your breast.



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



If breast cancer is found early:

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



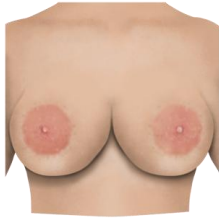
Finding breast cancer early in older women can mean it is easier for them to manage other health problems while they have cancer treatment.



Breast cancers are found more easily on mammograms of older women than younger women.



This is because breast tissue in older women is not as dense / thick as in younger women.



Dense / thick breast tissue can make breast cancers harder to find.



We may use **artificial intelligence / AI** to measure breast density in the **future**.



Artificial intelligence means computer programs that can do some of the things humans can do like:

- learning
- solving / working out problems.



The **future** is time that has not yet happened.



Some of these cancers may never develop / grow to put your life in danger.



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

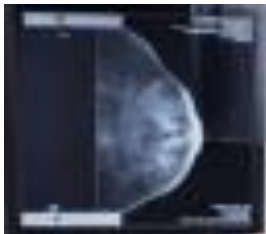
- are older

and

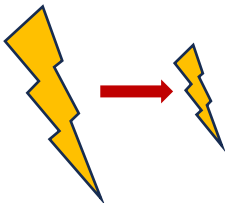
- have very bad health problems.



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



Mammograms are x-rays.



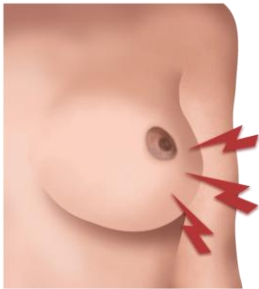
X-rays uses a small amount of **radiation** which will not usually harm you.



Radiation is:

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

Radiation used in mammograms is so small that it does not harm you.



Breast screening can sometimes be:

- uncomfortable
- worrying.



You can bring a support person with you to your mammogram.

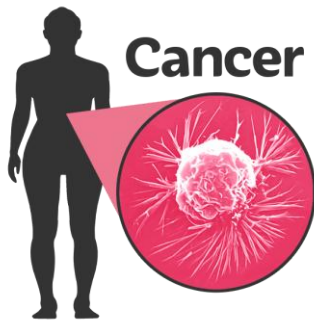


To find out more about support visit our **website**:

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



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



Mammograms can miss some cancers.

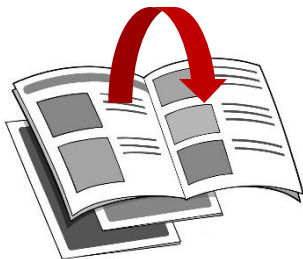
Cancers can develop / grow between mammograms.



Go to **pages 30 to 32** to find out more information about breast health.



You can also contact us for more information.



Our contact information is on **pages 33 to 35.**

Booking mammograms with us

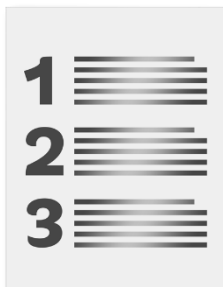


If you are **eligible** you should get an invitation for a mammogram with BreastScreen Aotearoa in:

- an email
- a text
- a letter.



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



You can use the link to:

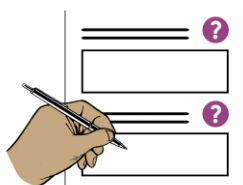
- **enrol** in our breast screening programme
- make an appointment to get your mammogram.





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

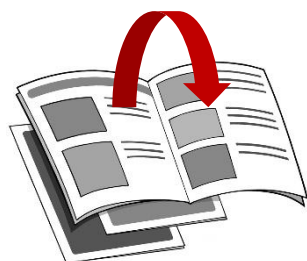


You can also enrol by completing an enrolment form at this **website**:

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



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



Go to **pages 33 to 35** to find out how to contact us.

It is your choice



You can decide at any time if you:

- want to be in our breast screening programme
- do not want to be in our breast screening programme.



If you decide not to be in our breast screening programme you can join again if:

- you want to

and

- you are still eligible.





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

- have your mammograms with a different service

but

- you may have to pay for them.

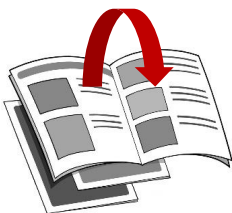


We will not have the information about your mammograms if you get them done somewhere else.



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

<https://www.timetobreastscreen.nz>



Go to **pages 33 to 35** 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 you may wish to use to get your mammogram.



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

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



If you are not eligible for our screening programme you can have free mammograms at a public hospital if you have:



- a higher chance of getting breast cancer
- breast cancer symptoms.



You will need a healthcare provider to make a **referral** for you so you can do this.



A **referral** is when your information is sent to a service to tell them you need their support.



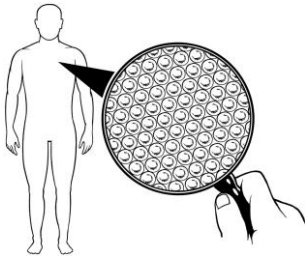
You can get a referral if you have had 1 or more of these things:

- breast cancer
- a **biopsy** showing breast **cells** that are not normal
- a **family history** of:
 - breast cancer
 - ovarian cancer.





Here a **biopsy** is where somebody like a doctor takes some cells from your breast to test it for cancer.



Your body is made of tiny parts called **cells**.



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

- mother
- sister
- grandmother.



What women aged 75 and over should know



You can talk to your healthcare provider to decide if you should keep getting mammograms.



If you notice any new changes to your breasts see your doctor / health provider as soon as possible.



It does not matter how old you are.

Your chances of getting breast cancer



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



If you are over 70 with a family history of breast cancer your chances of getting breast cancer:

- are higher

than

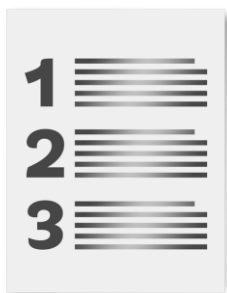
- women with no family history of the same age.



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



Talk to your doctor / health provider if you notice any signs of breast cancer.



We tell you the signs to be aware of in the next part of this Easy Read.

You can talk to your doctor / health provider about:



- if having a mammogram is still a good thing for you to do
- your risk of getting breast cancer
- any costs you may have to pay to have a mammogram.



You can also talk to your health provider about:

- how to get a referral to have a mammogram
- what you want to do.



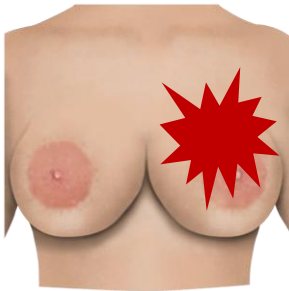
Information about breast health



Here **potential** means that the signs could be breast cancer.

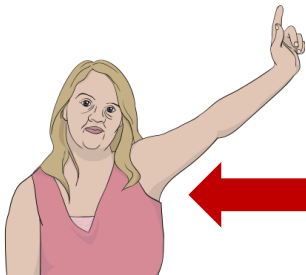
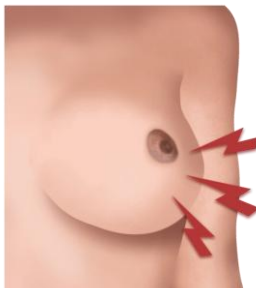
It is important to:

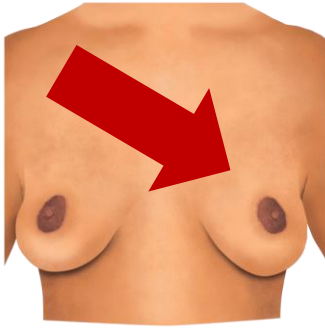
- know your breasts
- notice new changes.



These signs can be:

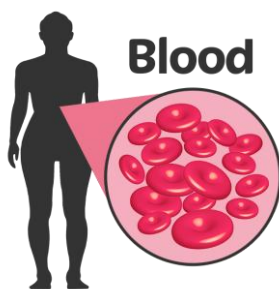
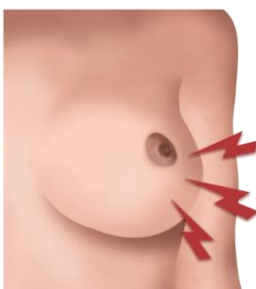
- a new lump in your:
 - breast
 - armpit
- changes to your breast:
 - shape
 - size.





Other signs of breast cancer can be:

- changes to the skin of the breast like:
 - dimpling / slight dents
 - puckering / wrinkles
- when a part of your breast feels thicker than other parts of it
- changes to the nipple like:
 - turning inwards
 - ulcers / sores
 - new itching
 - seeing discharge like pus
 - bleeding
- redness on a part of the breast
- pain in the breast that does not go away.





These signs:

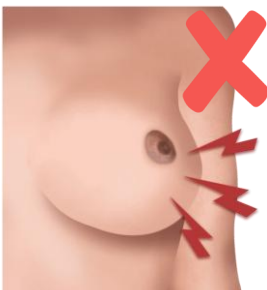
- do not always mean you have breast cancer
- need to be checked by your doctor / health provider.



If you notice any of these signs visit your healthcare provider to get them checked as soon as you can.



Tell us if your mammogram was uncomfortable before your next one.



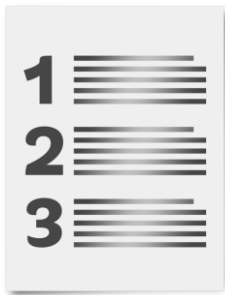
We will make sure you are more comfortable the next time you come to get a mammogram.

More information



You can **call** us free 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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