

# BreastCheck – The National Breast Screening Programme

## Informed Consent

### What is informed consent for taking part in breast screening?

- You can choose to take part in screening.
- Informed consent is your choice about taking part in breast screening, made with the knowledge and understanding of the benefits and risks involved. When you come for a breast screen, we will ask you to sign a consent form to tell us that you understand the potential benefits and harms of breast screening.
- Our information on breast screening is available in different formats. These include leaflets, website information, easy-reads and resources in different languages. This is to support and enable you to make an informed choice to take part. See [hse.ie/BreastCheck](http://hse.ie/BreastCheck)

### Can I withdraw consent?

- Yes. You can withdraw consent at any time throughout the process. We will stop the breast screen if you wish, and we will do our best to help you with your concerns.

### What are the benefits of breast screening?

- BreastCheck is Ireland's free national breast screening programme.
- BreastCheck aims to screen women, aged 50-69, with digital mammography every 2 years to pick up signs of early breast cancer.
- Screening will detect approximately 7 breast cancers in every 1,000 women screened.
- Screening reduces the number of women who will have a serious outcome from breast cancer.
- Screening reduces the number of women dying from breast cancer.
- Screening allows for appropriate care for those who need further tests and treatment.
- If breast cancer is found early, your chances of survival are much better than if it is found at a later stage.

### What are the limitations of breast screening?

- Digital mammography is currently the most reliable way of detecting breast cancer for population screening, but it is not a perfect test.
- A small proportion of breast cancers are not visible on mammography. Some cancers are so subtle/small that they are very difficult to see on mammography.

- There is a small chance that a cancer could be missed on a screening mammogram. This may lead to a diagnosis of breast cancer at a later stage.
- Having a breast screen means your breasts are exposed to a small amount of radiation. Research shows that the benefits of regular breast screens outweigh any possible risks from radiation.
- Many women have findings on mammography that have a benign appearance, that is, will do no harm. The vast majority of these are truly benign and will do no harm. It is not best clinical or ethical practice to recall every woman with a benign finding as this would lead to over-investigation and potential harm. A very small proportion of findings which have a benign appearance turn out to be cancers. To minimise harm and maximise the benefit to all women screened, the programme aims to recall people who are most likely to benefit from further investigation.
- For every 1,000 participants screened, about 40 will be invited for more tests and 7 will have breast cancer diagnosed by screening. Such tests (e.g. another mammogram/ultrasound/biopsy) are an unavoidable part of screening. While the programme aims to keep such interventions to a minimum, some women may feel anxious or worried when they are called back. However, these tests are necessary to confirm or rule out a diagnosis of cancer.
- Breast screening may find breast cancers that are potentially not life-threatening. This means you may be treated for a cancer that may never be harmful to you. In screening programmes, this is known as over-treatment. It is also possible that the treatment itself may cause harm. Unfortunately, it is not possible at this time to predict who will be affected by these types of cancers and so all women diagnosed with breast cancer are offered conventional treatment.
- It is fully expected that approximately 2 in every 1,000 women screened will develop breast cancer in the two-year period after receiving a normal result from a screening mammogram. These are known as interval cancers. Interval cancers are an unavoidable limitation of all breast cancer screening programmes.
- If you are diagnosed with breast cancer within two years of a normal BreastCheck mammogram or assessment result (an interval cancer) you can ask for a review.

Contact: [review.request@screeningservice.ie](mailto:review.request@screeningservice.ie)  
or National Screening Service, King's Inns House,  
200 Parnell St, Freeport FDN7612, Dublin 1,  
D01A3Y8.

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## What do I do next?

- I have read the information above, and I am fully aware that the BreastCheck mammogram does not detect every breast cancer and that a small number of cancers will not be found by screening.
- I have read the patient information leaflet.
- I understand that to ensure that I receive correct care and follow-up, BreastCheck may need to share my mammograms and laboratory results with other healthcare practitioners and healthcare providers such as my GP, my consultant(s) and relevant hospital(s).
- I understand that BreastCheck may need to request prior mammograms when available from other relevant healthcare providers.
- I have read the BreastCheck Privacy Notice.

## Privacy Notice

When you take part in BreastCheck, The National Breast Screening Programme, you will give us some personal data. This includes data such as your name, address, date of birth, and relevant healthcare information. The HSE's National Screening Service is the data controller for your personal data. We will keep your personal data safe and private. We will follow data protection laws for storing and using your personal information. We use this data to complete your screening test, invite you for follow-up tests if necessary, and invite you for future screening. We may also use it for:

- quality assurance or quality improvement
- sending appointment reminders
- sharing your patient experience with us
- contacting people to help us with research
- other purposes carried out in fulfilment of our responsibilities as a public health service.

We will follow the HSE's data protection policy. You can find out more about your data protection rights and how to use them at [www.hse.ie/gdpr](http://www.hse.ie/gdpr)