

Breast Cancer Screening for People Ages 40 to 49

What You Need To Know

The Ontario Breast Screening Program encourages people ages 40 to 49 to make an informed decision about whether to get checked, or screened, for breast cancer. Talk with your family doctor, your nurse practitioner or a Health811 navigator about:

- your personal risk of getting breast cancer
- the potential benefits and potential harms of breast cancer screening
- what matters most to you in taking care of your health

Most people in your age group who decide to get screened for breast cancer should get a mammogram every 2 years.

Who Can Participate in the Ontario Breast Screening Program?

Women, Two-Spirit people, trans people and nonbinary people ages 40 to 74 qualify for screening if they:

- have no breast cancer symptoms
- have no personal history of breast cancer
- have not had a mastectomy (surgery to remove breast tissue)
- have not had a screening mammogram within the last 11 months
- are transfeminine and have used feminizing hormones for at least 5 years in a row

It is also safe and effective to get screened during pregnancy. If you do not want to get screened while you are pregnant, you can start screening 3 months after giving birth, even if you are still lactating.

Remember: Contact your family doctor or nurse practitioner if you notice any changes in your breasts (chest), such as a lump or redness that does not go away, or changes to your nipple. The effects of pregnancy and breastfeeding can hide breast cancer symptoms or cause them to be overlooked, so it is important not to ignore them. Changes to the breast (chest) are not always caused by cancer, but they should be checked right away.

Understanding Your Personal Risk

Breast cancer risk factors are personal characteristics that affect your chance of getting breast cancer. You can learn more about your personal risk factors by completing the My CancerIQ breast cancer risk online questionnaire (mycancerIQ.ca), which takes about 15 minutes and is available in English and French.

Some research shows that the chances of getting breast cancer or dying from breast cancer can vary for people of different races and ethnicities. Data from Canadian populations shows that non-White females are diagnosed with and die from breast cancer at a younger age than White females.

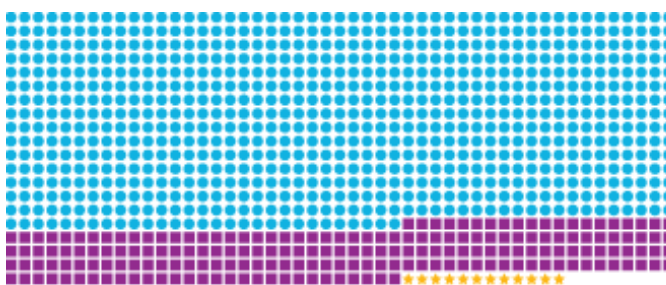
However, there is not enough research to make specific breast cancer screening recommendations based on race, ethnicity, or Indigeneity. For more information see our web page on the topic: ontariohealth.ca/breast-cancer-differences.

Deciding if Screening is Right for You

Generally, people ages 40 to 49 have a lower chance of getting breast cancer than people ages 50 to 74. This means that the potential benefits and potential harms of breast cancer screening may be different for you than for people ages 50 to 74. If you decide not to screen right now, you can change your mind later. In the Ontario Breast Screening Program you can start screening at any time from age 40 to 74.

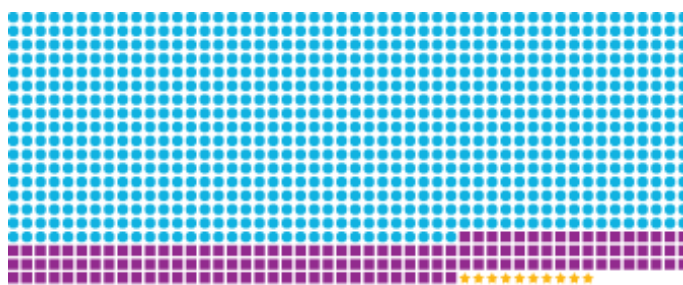
Based on information from breast cancer screening programs in the United States it is estimated that:

IF 1,000 WOMEN START SCREENING AT AGE 40



779 women will **not experience any serious harms** from breast cancer screening (blue dot*)
Up to **200 unnecessary biopsies** will occur over their lifetimes (purple square*)
12 cases of overdiagnosis will occur over their lifetimes (yellow star*)
Up to **9 deaths from breast cancer will be avoided** over their lifetimes (green triangle*)
**Each shape represents 1 person*

IF 1,000 WOMEN START SCREENING AT AGE 50



833 women will **not experience any serious harms** from breast cancer screening (blue dot*)
Up to **150 unnecessary biopsies** will occur over their lifetimes (purple square*)
10 cases of overdiagnosis will occur over their lifetimes (yellow star*)
Up to **7 deaths from breast cancer will be avoided** over their lifetimes (green triangle*)
**Each shape represents 1 person*

The group that starts screening at age 40 is slightly less likely to die from breast cancer than the group that starts screening at age 50. However, the group that starts screening at age 40 is also more likely to experience harms from screening, such as false-positive results (results that are abnormal, even if there is no cancer), unneeded biopsies (tissue samples) and overdiagnosis (finding and treating a cancer that would not cause harm in someone's lifetime). Because this information is from the United States, it may not apply to Canadians due to the differences in our health care systems.

How to Make a Screening Appointment

You can make an appointment for a mammogram by contacting an Ontario Breast Screening Program location. You do not need a referral, or order, from your doctor or nurse practitioner to get screened. To find locations, accessibility information, hours of operation, wait times and contact information, visit the Ontario Health Wait Times site at ontariohealth.ca/breastscreeninglocations or call 1-800-668-9304 to be connected to an Ontario Breast Screening Program location.