**[insert region] Residents Who are Overdue for Breast Cancer Screening Encouraged To Be Tested** *Safe In-person cancer screening available through health care providers in [insert region]*

**Date (CITY, ON) – On the occasion of** Breast Cancer Awareness Month, [REGIONAL CANCER PROGRAM], in partnership with Ontario Health, is encouraging [eligible](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/guidelines-advice/cancer-continuum/screening/breast-screening-guidelines-summary#:~:text=1%20first%2Ddegree%20female%20relative,at%20the%20time%20of%20screening) Ontarians ages 50 to 74 years old to talk to their family doctor or nurse practitioner about getting checked for breast cancer.

Every year, approximately 12,000 Ontario women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and approximately 2,000 will die from it. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Ontario women, but more people in Ontario survive breast cancer than almost every other cancer. Regular screening is important because it can find breast cancer early when treatment has a better chance of working.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many non-urgent health care procedures in Ontario, including cancer screening, were paused or deferred to prioritize urgent health care needs and reduce the spread of COVID-19. While screening has resumed, some patients have either been challenged to, or reluctant to, access routine medical care and screening.

Findings from an [Ontario study](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34217413/) indicate that in 2020 there was about a 41 per cent drop in cancer screening tests compared to 2019 pre-pandemic levels. While screening for breast, cervical, colorectal and lung cancers in 2021 remains 11 to 22 per cent below 2019 levels, volumes are beginning to increase as people return to get screened. For example, in June 2021, monthly breast screening tests were at about 9 per cent above June 2019 levels.

“We have all taken tremendous measures to stay safe and healthy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic including staying home, but getting checked for breast cancer is still important,” said Dr. Linda Rabeneck, Vice-President, Prevention and Cancer Control at Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario). “Health care providers and hospitals in Ontario have strict infection control measures in place so people who need to can visit these sites in person. I encourage you to speak with your family doctor or nurse practitioner if you are overdue for a mammogram.”

[Note to region – include local stats if relevant]

[PLACEHOLDER FOR INFORMATION ON REGIONAL MAMMOTHONS OR EVENTS PROMOTING SCREENING]

[PLACEHOLDER FOR REGIONAL SPOKESPERSON QUOTE]

[REGIONAL CANCER PROGRAM], in partnership with Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario), checks two different groups of people in Ontario for breast cancer: those at average risk and those at high risk. The Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) recommends that:

* Most people ages 50 to 74 who are eligible for the OBSP get checked every two years with a mammogram.
* People ages 30 to 69 who meet the [High Risk OBSP eligibility criteria](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/guidelines-advice/cancer-continuum/screening/breast-screening-guidelines-summary#:~:text=1%20first%2Ddegree%20female%20relative,at%20the%20time%20of%20screening) get checked once a year with both a mammogram and breast magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) (or screening breast ultrasound if MRI is not medically appropriate).
* People ages 70 to 74 who are already in the High Risk OBSP get checked once a year with a mammogram through the program.

Talk to your family doctor or nurse practitioner about your breast health and screening test options. To learn more, visit [Regional website or www.cancercareontario.ca/bcam]. If you live in a First Nation community, visit your nursing station or health centre for more information.

Important research is being undertaken to better understand breast cancer risk and deliver more personalized screening tests for Ontarians. Learn more about the study and who you may participate here: [www.cancercareontario.ca/perspective](http://www.cancercareontario.ca/perspective).

**[Insert Regional boilerplate]**

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**For more information, please contact:**

**[Insert Regional contact information]**

*Version française disponible.*