



## Breast Cancer and You

The risk of breast cancer increases with age, with 61 percent of cases occurring in women ages 50 to 74. Most women diagnosed with breast cancer do not have a significant family history of the disease.

It is estimated that every year 10,100 Ontario women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and that 1,900 will die from the disease. Early detection can reduce the number of deaths.

### Women at high risk for breast cancer

Some women are at an increased risk of developing breast cancer. Women ages 30 to 69 are considered to be at high risk if:

- They have a genetic mutation that puts them at high risk for breast cancer
- They have a parent, sibling or child who has a genetic mutation that puts them at high risk for breast cancer
- They have a family history that indicates a lifetime risk of breast cancer that is greater than or equal to 25 percent confirmed through genetic assessment

- They received radiation therapy to the chest before 30 years of age as treatment for another cancer or condition (e.g. Hodgkin lymphoma)

The Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) recommends that women between the ages of 30 and 69 who are at high risk for breast cancer get screened with annual mammography and breast magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). If MRI is not medically appropriate, a screening breast ultrasound may be given instead.

Women at high risk have a greater estimated lifetime risk of developing breast cancer (up to 85 percent) than the general population (10 percent to 12 percent).

### Take the next step

Speak to your doctor or nurse practitioner at your next regular visit about the right screening at the right time.

### It is easy to get screened

Women ages 50 to 74 can:

- Contact any OBSP site to make an appointment. Go to [cancercareontario.ca/obsplocations](http://cancercareontario.ca/obsplocations)

### OR

- Contact their healthcare provider and get referred to a breast screening site.

Women ages 30 to 69 who think they may be at high risk for breast cancer can:

- Visit their family doctor for a referral for screening based on their family or medical history.



### A healthy lifestyle may reduce your risk for breast cancer:

- Maintain a healthy body weight, especially after menopause
- Be physically active
- Have no more than one alcoholic drink per day, if at all
- Be a non-smoker and avoid second-hand smoke
- Limit your time on hormone replacement therapy, if used
- Talk to your healthcare provider for information about screening with mammography.

Regular mammography, generally every two years, is the best way for most women ages 50 to 74 to be proactive about their breast health.

### Find out more:

- ServiceOntario: **1-877-234-4343**  
TTY **1-800-387-5559**
- Telehealth Ontario: **1-866-797-0000**  
TTY **1-866-797-0007**
- Ontario Breast Screening Program: [cancercareontario.ca/obsp](http://cancercareontario.ca/obsp)  
**1-800-668-9304**

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## Breast Cancer Screening

Find out when it is the right time for you to start screening.

Visit [cancercareontario.ca/obsp](http://cancercareontario.ca/obsp)



# Breast Cancer Screening

Breast cancer can be impossible to see or feel and is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Ontario women. The good news is, regular breast cancer screening can find cancer early when it may be smaller and easier to treat. That’s why regular breast cancer screening at the right time is so important.

It is recommended that most women ages 50 to 74 get regular breast cancer screening with mammography every two years. Women with a family history of cancer or other risk factors are at an increased risk of developing breast cancer and should speak to their doctor or nurse practitioner about when they should begin screening.

Regardless of her age, any woman who notices changes with her breasts or has concerns should see her family doctor or nurse practitioner. Most changes are non-cancerous, but should be checked right away.

## Breast Awareness

Contact your doctor if you notice:

- A lump or dimpling,
- Changes in your nipple or fluid leaking from the nipple,
- Skin changes or redness that does not go away, or
- Any other changes in your breasts.

## Mammography

A mammogram is an X-ray that can detect abnormalities in the breast, even when they may be too small for you and your doctor or nurse practitioner to feel or see.

A technologist specializing in mammography will place a woman’s breast on a special X-ray machine. A plastic plate will be pressed down slowly to flatten the breast and hold it in place for a few seconds. There will be some pressure on the breast, similar to a tight blood pressure cuff, for a few seconds during the X-ray. This pressure does not harm the breast tissue.

Two pictures are taken of each breast. For most women, the time it takes to get a mammogram is less than 10 minutes. The technologist is trained to ensure that the experience is as comfortable as possible and will be able to adjust the pressure if necessary.

For most women, mammogram results will be normal. In the case of any abnormalities, mammograms are the best way to detect breast cancer early even before there are any noticeable symptoms.

## How effective are screening mammograms?

- Mammography is the most effective screening approach for the early detection of breast cancer for most women. Early detection can reduce deaths from breast cancer because:
  - There is a better chance of treating the cancer successfully
  - It is less likely to spread
  - There may be more treatment options
- Screening tests are not perfect and cancers may be missed. Also, some cancers develop in the time between screens. These are among the many reasons that regular screening is important.
- Some breast cancers that appear on a mammogram may never progress to the point where a woman has symptoms during her lifetime. Therefore, some women may have surgery or treatment for a breast cancer that would never have been life-threatening.
- Not all cancers found at screening can be treated successfully. However, regular mammograms for women ages 50 to 74 can reduce the risk of dying from breast cancer.



## Some helpful hints to prepare for a mammogram:

- Most women’s breasts are tender the week before and after their period. Book your mammogram for a time when your breasts are not so tender.
- Some women take a mild pain relief pill, like the kind you would take for a headache, about one hour before the appointment. Only do this if it will not affect any other medicines or any health concerns you may have.
- Some experts say that having less caffeine (like coffee, tea or other drinks high in caffeine) for two weeks before your mammogram can help reduce tenderness.
- On the day of the mammogram:
  - Wear a two-piece outfit. You will be asked to remove your top.
  - Do not use deodorants, antiperspirants, body lotions, or talcum powders. Metals in these products can show up on the X-ray picture.