



# BREAST CANCER AND YOU

The chance of developing breast cancer increases as women get older. More than 80% of breast cancers are found in women over age 50 and most women diagnosed with breast cancer have no family history of the disease.

In 2011, it is estimated that 9,000 Ontario women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and that 1,980 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 aged 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% confirmed through genetic assessment
- They received radiation therapy to the chest before 30 years of age as treatment for another cancer or condition (i.e. Hodgkin's disease)

For women between the ages of 30 and 69 who have been identified as being at high risk for breast cancer, yearly screening using both a mammogram and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is recommended. Women aged 30 to 69 at high risk for breast cancer have a chance of getting breast cancer that is two to five times higher than the general population.

## 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 at average risk for breast cancer between 50 and 74 years of age can:

- Contact any Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) location to make an appointment. Go to [ontario.ca/healthcareoptions](http://ontario.ca/healthcareoptions) to find an OBSP location near you.

OR

- Contact their doctor and get referred to a breast screening centre.

Women aged 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
- Most importantly, get screened. Regular mammography, generally every two years, is the best way for women 50 to 74 who are at average risk to be proactive about their breast health

## Find out more:

- Take the Time To Screen Tool at [ontario.ca/screenforlife](http://ontario.ca/screenforlife)
- 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: 1-800-668-9304

ServiceOntario is open during business hours and can provide general information on health care. Telehealth Ontario is a 24/7 service which uses registered nurses to answer your immediate health concerns.

Cancer Care Ontario  
Action Cancer Ontario



It's never this obvious.

# BREAST CANCER SCREENING

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

Visit [Ontario.ca/screenforlife](http://Ontario.ca/screenforlife)

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# 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, finding cancers early means that most women have more treatment options and an improved chance of survival. That's why regular breast cancer screening at the right time is so important.

It is recommended that women at average risk should get regular breast cancer screening with mammography every two years starting at 50 years of age. 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 their age, any woman who notices changes with their breasts or has concerns should see their 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, and
- Any other changes in your breasts.

# MAMMOGRAPHY

A mammogram is a low dose 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 cured. However, regular mammograms for women aged 50 to 74 years 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.