

Having a Mammogram

What is a Mammogram?

A Mammogram is the name for a specialised X-ray of the breast. Mammograms are carried out by Mammographers, female Radiographers or Assistant Practitioners that have had specialist training to perform this examination.

What are the potential risks?

During a Mammogram, your breasts are exposed to a small amount of radiation, which is around 0.6millievers (mSv). For comparison, in the UK the annual dose of natural background radiation a person receives is around 2.7 mSv, so the risk to your health is very low.

What are the benefits? - Why should I have this procedure?

Mammograms are able to detect changes within your breast, some of which you may be aware of such as a breast lump. A Mammogram may also detect changes that cannot be felt during a physical examination. This includes small changes within your breast which may require further investigation. The early detection of breast cancer can lead to higher success rates in treatment.

Why Mammography is the best tool for detecting breast cancer?

A Mammogram is the best tool for detecting breast cancer for several reasons. One reason is that this test can detect cancer in your breast up to 3 years sooner than you would notice a lump. It also gives doctors or Radiologists a clear image that shows patterns in your breast by monitoring these patterns it enables the doctors to act quickly so that less invasive treatment may be an option as well as giving you more treatment options to begin with. Finding a cancer more rapidly can increase the chance of cancer removal via surgery.

How can I prepare for my Mammogram?

There are no special preparations before this procedure. You can eat and drink normally, before and after, however please do not wear deodorant, talcum powder, lotion or perfume on your breasts and underarms as these products will affect the X-ray image.

- You may bring a friend or family member with you for support, however please note that they will not be allowed in the examination room with you.
- It is advisable to wear clothes that can be easily removed, as you will be asked to undress from the waist upwards.
- If you have breast implants; please inform the Radiographer when you arrive for your appointment.
- If you have a pacemaker; please inform the Radiographer when you arrive for your appointment.

What happens during the procedure?

The procedure should last no longer than 15-20 minutes. The Mammographer will call you in to the x-ray room, ask you a few questions about your general health and explain the procedure to you. If you have any additional questions, she will be more than happy to answer them for you.

Once all the questions have been answered and you are happy to proceed with the Mammogram, the Mammographer will ask you to remove all your clothes from the waist up. She will then get you to stand in front of the X-ray machine where she will position you for your Mammogram.

Each breast, in turn, will be placed on the X-ray machine and firmly compressed by a clear plate. The compression will only last a few seconds and does not cause any harm to the breasts. Compression is needed to keep the breast still and to get the clearest picture with the lowest amount of radiation possible. Usually two images are taken of each breast but if your breasts are larger than average it may be necessary to take more than two images of each breast.

Will I feel pain?

Some women find compression slightly uncomfortable and some feel short lived pain. The pain you may feel can depend on several factors:

- Where you are in your menstrual cycle
- Your individual pain threshold

We would encourage you to discuss any pain felt with the Mammographer so that she can try to find ways to make the exam more comfortable for you.

What happens after the procedure?

The Mammogram images will be reviewed by a radiologist and a report will be issued to the consultant that referred you. Sometimes it is necessary to call patients back for a further Mammogram to examine more closely any areas of change in the breast. This is very common and although may seem alarming at the time, it is normal procedure to help produce the most accurate report.

What do I need to do after I go home?

You can go back to normal activity, including work and sports.

What should I do if I have a problem?

Following a Mammogram you should not have any adverse after effects to cause concern. However we have included contact numbers at the bottom of this sheet if you feel you need any advice.

When will I receive my results?

Your Breast Consultant will write to you and your GP with your results which will arrive in the post, usually taking around three weeks but sometimes they can take longer.

If you have not been contacted by the breast team, please phone 0300 131 4500 and ask for the Breast Secretary on ext: 735385.

Contact us

If you need to change your appointment or have any queries, please contact one of our booking clerks on 0300 131 4500 on ext: 771814 or ext: 771815.

If you have any questions or problems after your appointment, please call 0300 131 4500 and ask for the Breast Consultants secretary on ext. 735385.

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

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Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet: Core Services

Next review date: July 2025

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