

## HOW CAN I GET THE MOST OUT OF MY MAMMOGRAM?

- Schedule your mammogram when your breasts are least tender to allow for optimal compression. This is usually the week after the onset of your period.
- Remember to abstain from using powder, deodorant or body cream on your chest and underarm areas on the day of the exam and wear a 2-piece outfit.
- Bring your previous mammograms so we can perform the best diagnostic evaluation possible.
- Be prepared to answer detailed questions about your personal and family health history.

## SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS

Base line mammogram at or just before age 40.

Yearly mammograms ages 40 - 50 (figures show 2 years is too long to leave between mammograms in this age group if the screening is to be effective).

Two-yearly mammograms from age 50. Under some circumstances yearly mammograms are recommended from age 50, including a strong family history, previous breast cancer or DCIS (precancer).

FOR AN APPOINTMENT  
PLEASE TELEPHONE

04 978 5500

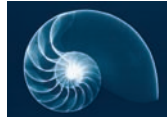
## A FINAL WORD...

10% (or more) of breast cancers will not be diagnosed on routine screening mammography (but of course most are detected).

If there is dense glandular tissue the detection rate for early cancer is less.

A breast lump (or any other breast change) should always be further investigated despite a normal mammogram.

If a breast lump (or any other breast change) develops between routine mammograms, this should also be investigated as soon as possible.



Pacific Radiology

[www.pacificradiology.co.nz](http://www.pacificradiology.co.nz)

**Mammography is available at the following Pacific Radiology branches:**

Wakefield Hospital  
Lambton  
Bowen Hospital  
Johnsonville  
Lower Hutt  
Paraparaumu

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Pacific Radiology

MAMMOGRAPHY

Patient Information



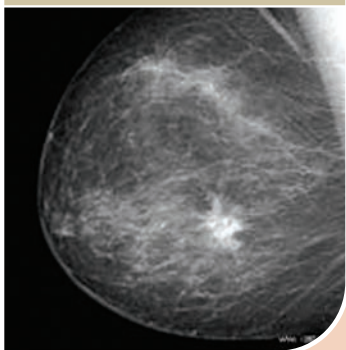
PARTNERSHIPS IN MEDICINE

## WHAT IS A MAMMOGRAM?

A mammogram is a low-dose x-ray study of your breasts. It is used to find irregularities too small to feel, or to help characterise known breast lumps.

Mammography is a safe procedure using the lowest doses of radiation. Gentle pressure is applied (see overleaf) to compress the breast between two plastic plates of the mammogram machine. Most women experience only minor discomfort – it is rare to experience pain.

Breast cancer on a mammogram.



The aim of mammography is to detect breast cancer at the earliest possible stage, before it can be felt, offering the best chance of cure.

**Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death for women.**

An annual screening mammogram is recommended for women

aged between 40 and 50 years. After that a mammogram every two years is advisable (this doesn't seem to make sense, but breast cancer in younger women can be faster growing, and two years is too long to leave between examinations in this age group).

**Women aged over 40 do not need a doctor's referral for a mammogram**, but we do need the name of your doctor to send the results to. It must be emphasised that routine screening mammography is only for women who do not have breast problems at all. If there is a lump in your breast or other symptoms, **you must see your doctor** before the mammogram. **You should not ignore a breast lump.**

If you are booked in for a routine mammogram, and a lump has appeared since your last one (or since your last doctor's visit), you must let the radiographer know - additional imaging will be needed.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### WHY DO I NEED TO BRING MY PREVIOUS MAMMOGRAMS?

There are many factors that determine how accurate a mammogram is in detecting small lesions. Noticing a small change from previously may help identify a very early problem – that may otherwise not be detected until it is larger at the next examination. In addition, having your previous mammogram helps us reduce the number of additional views we may need to take to clarify a finding.

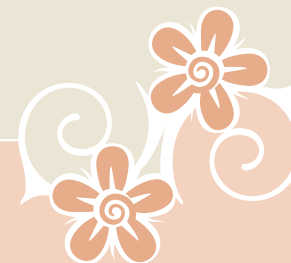
### WHY DO YOU HAVE TO COMPRESS MY BREAST?

Compression improves image quality (and therefore accuracy) by separating out overlapping structures, and by decreasing breast thickness to produce a more uniform depth over the film. Compression reduces the x-ray dose needed, and it also helps prevent movement which can cause blurring of the image. Unfortunately, there is no way around the need to compress, and indeed the greater the compression the better the picture. However, this is balanced with what is bearable. Usually the mammogram is best performed in the week following your period, when your breasts are less tender. Overall, your mammogram should not be a painful experience.

### WHY MIGHT I NEED ULTRASOUND OF THE BREAST OR ADDITIONAL MAMMOGRAM VIEWS?

The aim of having a mammogram is to detect abnormalities when they are very small, so that they can be dealt with effectively and with the least disruption to the remainder of the breast. This means that we tend to be very suspicious

of even very subtle shadows that we cannot readily account for, and additional views are often needed to reassure there is no underlying abnormality. The additional views can be a combination of different projections, magnification and focal compression. If there is a lump to be felt, we would usually perform additional views as a matter of routine, unless the lump is thought to be a cyst, when ultrasound is very helpful. Cysts are very common in the breast and are benign (meaning they aren't cancerous).



### FACTORS INCREASING THE RISK OF BREAST CANCER

- Smoking
- Old age
- Heavy alcohol intake
- Strong family history
- Previous breast cancer
- Late menopause (over 50)
- Previous benign breast biopsy
- Early onset of periods (under 12)
- Having a first child when older than 30
- Weight gain to obesity as an adult
- Previous radiation therapy