

Should you have a breast cancer screening?

There are a few drawbacks to consider.

- As with any medical examination, you can never be completely certain of the accuracy of the results.
 - Two to three per 1000 women in whom no abnormality is found somehow still get breast cancer before they are re-examined.
 - Nine out of ten women in whom an abnormality is found turn out not to have breast cancer after further examination.
- Sometimes breast cancer grows so slowly that the women are not affected their entire lives. In hindsight, screening and treatment would not be necessary.
- The screening involves a small dose of radiation. There is a very low risk that this radiation causes breast cancer. However, this risk is minimized by a continuous quality check.
- You have to wait a few weeks for the result.

But the benefits of the screening are much bigger.

- Because of the screening, breast cancer can be detected at an early stage, with a higher chance of cure.
 - 55% of breast cancers are found at such an early stage that almost all of them completely heal.

- 78% of women with breast cancer received treatment which saved the breast (no mastectomy).
- At least two radiologists examine the X-rays. This enhances the quality of the screening.
- A screening mammogram is the best way to detect breast cancer in women above 50. It is not necessary to have an ultrasound scan as well.
- Experienced and competent staff will examine you, in a centre recognised by the Flemish government.
- The screening is free of cost.

You can get more information in breast cancer screening by

- consulting your GP or gynaecologist
- contacting the Centrum voor Kankeropsporing (Cancer Screening Centre)
- calling the free phone number **0800 60 160**
- visiting the website **www.bevolkingsonderzoek.be**



**BEVOLKINGS
ONDERZOEK**



Translation from: Dutch of the flyer "Laat naar je borsten kijken" from the screening program for breast cancer - version 2012.

Get screened for breast cancer



**BEVOLKINGS
ONDERZOEK
BORSTKANKER**

Are you having a breast cancer screening?

Breast cancer screening allows you to be examined every two years from the year in which you turn 50 years old until the year in which you turn 69 years old.

- Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women.
- Three in four women with breast cancer are older than 50 years old.
- If breast cancer is detected at an early stage, there is a higher chance of cure.

Please first contact your GP

- if you have symptoms that may indicate breast cancer: a lump or a dimple in the breast, a nipple that turns inwards, a rash around the nipple, inflammation or loss of moisture;
- an increased risk of breast cancer due to an unusually high number of close relatives (such as your mother, sister or daughter) with breast cancer;
- an ongoing treatment for breast cancer (up to 10 years after diagnosis).

How much does the screening cost?

A breast cancer screening is free of cost if you are a member of a Belgian health insurance fund. If you are not a member, perhaps you have an insurance that pays for the screening, for example at work.

How is the screening performed?

Take a prescription from your doctor or an invitation letter to a recognised "mammography unit". You should avoid using deodorant, talcum powder or lotion on the day of the screening, because these can make the X-rays less clear.

The radiologist will explain the procedure and its benefits and drawbacks. You will be asked to sign a consent form. The procedure follows the rules set out in the law on privacy.

The radiologist or radiographer will take two X-rays of each breast, called "mammograms", which takes about five minutes.

To take the X-rays, each breast is compressed between two plates for a couple of seconds. This can be painful, but it is necessary to be able to make clear images with a lower dose of radiation.

What happens next?

The radiologist of the centre where the X-rays were taken will examine them a the first time. Then, the X-rays are sent to the Centrum voor Kankeropsporing (Cancer Screening Centre), where a second radiologist reviews them. If his or her findings are different from those of the first radiologist, your X-rays will be examined by a third radiologist.

If you already had a screening before this one, the radiologists will compare the new X-rays with those of the previous screening. This way they can easily detect any changes.

You and your doctor will receive the results after about 3 weeks.

No abnormalities

In 95% of women who are examined, the radiologists find no abnormalities. In this case, you can wait for two years to have another screening. However, there is still a chance that the radiologists have not detected the cancerous cells or that breast cancer develops in the meantime. Therefore, it is important to continue to pay close attention to changes in your breasts: a lump, a dimple, a nipple that turns inwards, a rash around the nipple, inflammation or loss of moisture. Consult your doctor if you notice anything like this.

An abnormality

In 5% of the women who are examined, the radiologists detect an abnormality in the breast. This does not mean that you have breast cancer, but rather that more tests are required. Discuss this with your doctor. After the screening, only one in ten women with an abnormality actually turn out to have breast cancer.