Further Examination of Breast Cancer

2016
If further examinations are required
You have received the results letter about your participation in the breast cancer screening programme. It is possible that the x-rays have not provided enough information to allow a proper assessment and a definitive result can only be obtained after further investigation at a hospital. Alternatively, an abnormality may have been detected. Further investigation at a hospital will establish whether the abnormality is benign or malignant. 25 in every 1,000 women are referred to a hospital. Of these 25 women, around 7 are found to have breast cancer. We have already informed your GP of the results. If you have not yet spoken to your GP, we advise you to make an appointment. It is impossible to tell in advance which (or how many) examinations will be needed at the hospital in order to make a definitive diagnosis. Sometimes the diagnosis becomes clear on the day of the hospital visit. However, additional examinations may also be required, which cannot always be performed on the same day or at the same hospital.

The hospital visit
In consultation with your GP you can decide which hospital you go to for further examination. In making your choice you can use the information at www.monitorborstkankerzorg.nl. This website combines patient experiences with information about the range of services available at the hospital. The hospital specialist will carry out a number of examinations. He or she will tell you when you can expect to receive the results. These examinations are usually performed on an outpatient basis. Your GP can provide you with any support you may need and answer your questions. And of course you can also put your questions to the experts at the hospital.

Possible examinations
The hospital specialist will decide which examinations are required. Sometimes several examinations will be needed in order to establish the diagnosis. The most common examinations are outlined opposite.
**Physical examination**  The specialist examines your breasts and armpits to find out whether there is a palpable abnormality. He or she will also ask you a number of questions about yourself, your medical history and your family.

**Mammography**  Additional pictures are taken of your breasts at the hospital with an x-ray machine. Sometimes it is necessary to make detailed and magnified images of one or both breasts. This provides a clearer view of the suspicious area in order to allow a better assessment.

**Ultrasound**  This technique uses sound waves to provide additional information about the size and nature of the suspicious area. Ultrasound is only performed after x-rays have been taken. A biopsy may also be required, which involves using a fine needle to remove a sample of tissue from the suspicious area.

The hospital may also need to carry out other additional examinations. More detailed information is available from:
- the Dutch Breast Cancer Society (BVN):  
  www.borstkanker.nl/aanvullend_onderzoek
- www.kanker.nl/borstkanker
- The breast clinic at the hospital of your choice

Please note: The hospital examinations are not part of the screening programme. The costs of these follow-up examinations fall under your health insurance. It is possible you may have to pay some or all of the costs yourself. This will depend on the size of your insurance excess and how much of it you have used. Discuss this with your health insurance company if you have any questions.

This leaflet does not contain information about any treatment that may follow the examinations. You can ask the specialist about such treatment.
The result of the examinations
It is possible that the result will quickly become clear and consequently not all of the examinations will be required. It may turn out that nothing is amiss. This will then have been established with the aid of the examinations performed at the hospital. Alternatively, the result may be a benign abnormality, e.g. a cyst (blister). However, it is also possible that the examinations may indicate a malignant abnormality, i.e. breast cancer. Often this will be a small abnormality, so small that you would not even have felt it. This usually means that breast cancer has been detected early, and hence there is a good chance of recovery.

What happens to the results?
The specialist receives your screening results from the screening organisation. You can lodge an objection to this. To do so you can either request a form from the screening organisation or download one from the website. To find your screening organisation’s website go to: www.bevolkingsonderzoekborstkanker.nl

If you have any questions
Further information can be found in the results letter or on the website: www.bevolkingsonderzoekborstkanker.nl
If your questions are of a medical nature, it is best to contact your GP or specialist.

You can identify the screening programmes by this logo:

bevolkingsonderzoek

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