



National Institute for Public Health
and the Environment
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport

National Programme for Breast Cancer Screening

Invitation



What is the national programme for breast cancer screening?

The national programme for breast cancer screening tries to detect breast cancer. All women in the Netherlands aged 50 to 75 will receive an invitation every two years to participate. If you take part, we will take X-rays of your breasts. This allows us to detect breast cancer even before you start noticing anything is wrong.

Why is there a screening programme?

One in seven women in the Netherlands will develop breast cancer. The screening programme is intended to detect breast cancer at the earliest possible moment. The sooner breast cancer is detected, the bigger the chance of successful treatment. It also means that in many cases, less radical treatment is required.

What is this brochure for?

This brochure discusses the national programme for breast cancer screening. It is up to you whether or not you participate. The information in the brochure will help you decide.

The screening programme is free

Participation in the screening programme is free of charge. You may require subsequent examination at the hospital. This follow-up examination is not part of the screening programme. These costs are covered by your health care insurance. You may be obliged to pay the costs, or a part of them, yourself. This depends on your excess amount and how much you have already used of this. Do you have any questions about this? If so, please contact your health care insurer.

What is breast cancer?

- The body consists of millions of cells. Changes in cells can cause the cells to grow too fast and damage the body. This is called cancer.
- There are different types of cancer. The most common type of cancer in women is breast cancer.
- In the beginning, breast cancer can develop without you even noticing anything.
- Breast cancer may grow slowly, but its spread can also be rapid. This varies per person.
- Women can die of breast cancer. If breast cancer is detected early on, there is a better chance of curing it.

More information about breast cancer

www.borstkanker.nl

www.kwf.nl

If you notice changes in your breast, please visit your GP

The screening programme is intended for women who do not have any symptoms. Do you have any of the following symptoms?

- A lump in your breast.
- An indentation or dimple in the skin of your breast.
- Thicker skin than normal in an area of your breast.
- Bloody discharge from your nipple.
- Changes in your nipple.
- Your breast feeling different.

In that case, do not wait for an invitation for the screening, but contact your GP.

The screening in five steps

1. The letter

This brochure was accompanied by a letter, with an appointment to have X-rays of your breast taken.

- ✉ Please bring the letter and valid proof of identity (passport, ID card or driving license) to the appointment.
- 🕒 The appointment lasts about 20 minutes.



2. The screening centre

The examination takes place at a screening centre near you. An employee will check your information. You will then be asked to wait in the waiting area.

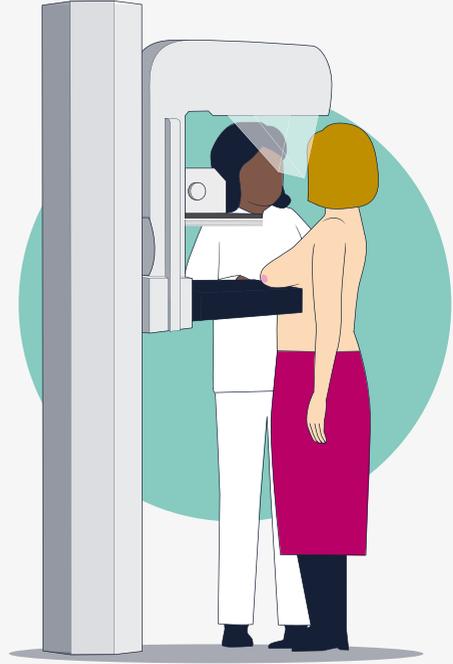


3. X-rays

Is it your turn? Please remove the top part of your clothing in the dressing room. We will inform you about the procedure. Do you have any scarring on your breasts? Or are your breasts highly sensitive? If you tell us about this, we can take this into account.

We will take two X-rays of each breast. In some cases, more X-rays are required. For each image, we will press your breast between two plates for a couple of seconds. This is necessary to produce a clear image, with as little radiation as possible.

This compression process may be painful, but it does not harm your breast. In some cases, it can cause bruising. Is the pressure too painful? Please inform our employee.



4. Have we succeeded in taking all images?

Once all images have been taken, you can get dressed again and go back to wait in the waiting area. We will check if the images show enough of the breasts, and if the images are technically good enough for an assessment. Is that not the case? If so, it could be necessary to retake one or more additional images. Otherwise, this is the end of the procedure. The breast X-rays will be sent to two radiologists. They will assess the images separately.



5. The results

You will receive a letter containing the results within 10 working days. Is your screening planned on the same day as other women in your street? It is possible that you do not receive the letter with the result on the same day as the other women. This says nothing about the results. You do not have to worry about that.

Do you want to see what happens during the screening?

Please watch the video showing all the steps on www.bevolkingsonderzoekborstkanker.nl

Useful information:

- The screening centre has no toilet facilities.
- Wear a comfortable top that is easy to take off.
- The screening centre employs both male and female employees.
- Do not put cream, powder or lotion on the upper part of your body.
- You are allowed to use deodorant.
- Do you use zinc ointment on your breasts? You must stop using this two to three weeks before the screening.

Remember to bring the following

- The letter that you received with this brochure. Write down the name and contact data of your GP on the letter.
- Your proof of identity (passport, ID card or driving licence).



Why do we use X-rays?

X-rays show abnormalities

X-rays allow us to examine your breast tissue. It enables us to detect any abnormalities that might be breast cancer. X-rays are still the best way to detect breast cancer in the screening programme.

We can detect breast cancer at an early stage

X-rays enable us to see abnormalities that you have not noticed yourself. The sooner we detect breast cancer, the bigger the chance of a successful cancer treatment.

We try to limit the radiation needed for each image

X-rays cause radiation. You are also exposed to radiation in daily life. In the Netherlands, this is approximately 2.6 millisievert per year. We take two X-rays of each breast. The total of four X-rays causes radiation of approximately 0.6 millisievert. Radiation can cause cancer, but the risk of these small amounts is very small.

How do we assess the X-rays?

Radiologists assess the X-rays

The X-rays are examined by two radiologists. They work separately. Radiologists are specialised in detecting abnormalities in X-rays. An abnormality can be the beginning of breast cancer.



An X-ray of your breast is called a 'mammogram'. 'Mamma' is the Latin word for female breast.

The screening is particularly useful if you take part every time

Have you taken part in previous screenings? In that case, the radiologists will compare the new images with the images taken at the previous examination. This allows them to notice any differences. This might help to detect abnormalities at an early stage.

It is up to you whether or not you participate

Just as with any other medical test, the screening has advantages and disadvantages. It is up to you whether or not you participate. It is important to take the following elements into consideration:

You could get worried

There is a chance you might be referred to the hospital, for instance, because an abnormality was detected in one of the images. Or because the images do not show enough information. This does not necessarily mean that you have breast cancer. But it could cause you some anxiety.

You run the risk of unnecessary treatment

In some women, breast cancer develops so slowly that it would not have affected them during their lifetime. However, breast cancer is nearly always treated. Has breast cancer been detected at the hospital? This could mean that you will be treated for cancer, even if it would not have affected you.

The screening does not provide complete certainty

Screening detects approximately seven out of every ten cases of breast cancer. If the X-rays do not show anything, there is still a small chance that you have breast cancer.

You can develop breast cancer in the period between two screening rounds

You will receive an invitation for screening every two years. It is possible that you develop breast cancer in the period between two screening rounds. That is why it is still very important to visit your GP if you notice any changes in your breasts.



For more details about the screening programme go to www.bevolkingsonderzoekborstkanker.nl.

Would you prefer not to participate in the screening programme?

In that case, please complete the sign-out form on the reverse of this leaflet.

For women from 50 to 75 years of age

You can participate from the age of 50

There are two reasons why you can participate from the age of 50:

- Breast cancer occurs more frequently in women over 50. Eight in ten women who develop breast cancer are over 50 years of age.
- Breasts of younger women often contain more glandular and connective tissue. This limits the efficacy in detecting breast cancer with X-rays. This tissue is also more susceptible to radiation.

You will receive an invitation every two years

You can take part in the screening programme every two years. More frequent imaging has more disadvantages than advantages for most women.

The population screening programme stops after you reach the age of 75

In women over 75, breast cancer usually develops slowly. At this age, it is very unlikely that we detect breast cancer that will be the cause of death. Participation in the population screening programme could lead to unnecessary treatment of cancer for these women.

You will receive an invitation from the age of 50 until the year you turn 76.

The Health Council makes recommendations

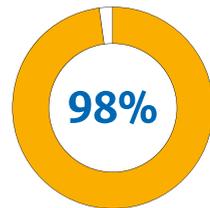
The government determines the target group for the population screening programme. This happens after recommendations from the Health Council, who carefully weighs all benefits and disadvantages. The Health Council has recommended not to change the ages for the population screening programme for the time being.

What can the results be?

After the screening, you will receive a letter containing the results within 10 working days. You can get **one of the following three** results:

1. No abnormalities found

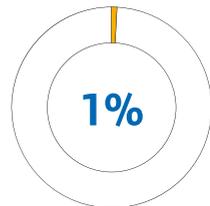
No signs of breast cancer were detected on the X-rays. You can take part again in the screening programme in two years. The screening does not provide complete certainty. There is a chance that existing breast cancer is not discovered. Breast cancer could also develop in the period between two screening rounds. Have you noticed any changes in your breast? If so, please contact your GP. The medical terms for this result are BI-RADS 1 and BI-RADS 2.



98 out of 100 women
get this result

2. No sufficient information

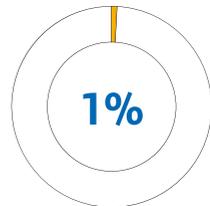
In this case, the X-rays have not provided enough information to allow a proper assessment. Further assessment in the hospital is required. This could mean an additional X-ray or an ultrasound scan. In most cases, there is nothing to worry about. The medical term for this result is BI-RADS 0.



1 out of 100 women
gets this result

3. An abnormality has been detected

The X-rays show an abnormality that could be breast cancer. Further assessment in the hospital is required. This could mean an X-ray or an ultrasound scan. In most cases, a small tissue sample is taken from the breast. It does not necessarily mean that you have breast cancer. The medical terms for this result are BI-RADS 4 and BI-RADS 5.



1 out of 100 women
gets this result

Your data

We obtained your details from the local authority

We have obtained your name, address and date of birth from the local authority. If you take part in the population screening programme, you give permission to use your details and the results of the screening for the population screening programme and any follow-up testing at the hospital.

We can consult your GP

Do you require follow-up testing because the images do not show enough information? Or because an abnormality was detected in one of the images? If so, we will contact your GP. The GP will provide a referral to the hospital.

Your privacy is protected

We use the results from the test to continue to improve the screening. For this goal, we will exchange data with research and care facilities. We always comply with the legislation that protects your privacy. Facilities that do not contribute to the improvement of the population screening programme cannot get access to the data.

You can object

Would you prefer us not to share your details or test results with care and research facilities? If so, you can object to this. You can request a form from the screening organisation in your area for this purpose. You can also download one from the website of your screening organisation. Go to www.bevolkingsonderzoekborstkanker.nl for more information. This website also offers more information about privacy and filing an objection.

More information

For more information about the advantages and disadvantages, breast cancer and the screening, please visit www.bevolkingsonderzoekborstkanker.nl

Do you have any questions, suggestions, or complaints?

If you have questions, suggestions or complaints, please contact the screening organisation in your region. The screening organisation coordinates the screening on behalf of the government. The phone number is given in the letter, or on your screening organisation's website.

1. Screening Programme 'Noord'
www.bevolkingsonderzoeknoord.nl

2. Screening Programme 'Oost'
www.bevolkingsonderzoekoost.nl

3. Screening Programme 'Zuid'
www.bevolkingsonderzoekzuid.nl

4. Screening Programme 'Zuid-West'
www.bevolkingsonderzoekzuid-west.nl

5. Screening Programme 'Midden-West'
www.bevolkingsonderzoekmidden-west.nl



***bevolkings*onderzoek**

A screening is a free medical examination for early detection of a disease. The government provides three screening programmes for cancer: These are screenings for cervical cancer, breast cancer, and bowel cancer. These diseases can be detected at an early stage, even before someone shows symptoms.

Information in other languages

This information is also available in Dutch, Turkish and Arabic at:
www.bevolkingsonderzoekborstkanker.nl/vertalingen

This brochure is the result of joint cooperation with:

bevolkingsonderzoek



B borstkankervereniging nederland



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