



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

For the early detection of cancers

Your invitation for **breast cancer screening**



Why this population screening?

One out of 7 women in the Netherlands will get breast cancer. Breast cancer is most common among women between 50 and 75 years old. That is why we invite these women to take part in this population screening.

The aim of the population screening is to detect breast cancer at the earliest possible moment. The earlier breast cancer is detected, the bigger the chance of successful treatment. The treatment that you need is often less intensive, too.

You decide if you want to take part. If you take part, we will take X-rays of your breasts. This will let us see if you have breast cancer, even before you notice anything yourself.

Why this leaflet?

This leaflet gives you information about the national programme for breast cancer screening. This information will help you decide if you want to take part.

What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is a malignant tumour of the breast. Breast cancer may grow slowly or rapidly. Sometimes, the tumour can spread to other parts of the body.

What happens during the screening?

We will take X-rays of your breasts. This will let us see if you have breast cancer, even before you notice anything yourself.

On pages 4 and 5, you can read step by step how the screening works. You can also watch the video at

www.bevolkingsonderzoeknederland.nl/en/borstkanker/het-onderzoek.

Good to know

- Most screening centres do not have toilets.
- Wear clothes on your top half that you can take off easily. If you like, you can bring a shawl or wrap to cover up while you wait in the changing cubicle.
- Men and women work in the screening centre. You can ask for a woman.
- Do not put ointment (cream), powder or lotion on the top half of your body. You may use deodorant.
- If you use zinc ointment on your breasts, you should stop using it three weeks before the screening.
- Your breasts may be sensitive for a few days after the screening.

Please bring the following with you to the screening:

- Your proof of identity, such as a passport or driving licence.
- The letter we sent you with this leaflet. This means that you should not throw the letter away after making an appointment. Please answer the questions on the back of this letter before the screening.

The screening in 5 steps

1 Making an appointment

We have sent you an invitation to have X-rays of your breasts taken.

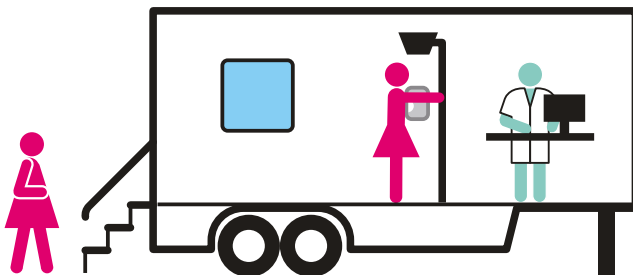
- You make an appointment yourself. This letter explains how you do this.
- Answer the questions on the back of the letter.
- **Bring the letter** and your proof of identity, such as a passport or driving licence, with you.



2 The screening centre

The screening will take place in a screening centre. An employee will check your information first.

The appointment will take around 20 minutes.

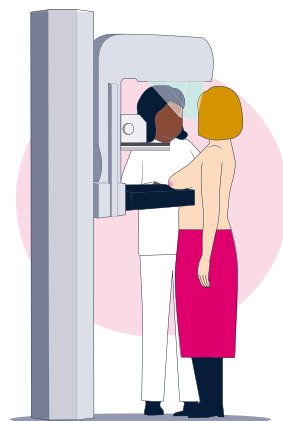


3 X-rays

When it is your turn, you go into a changing cubicle and take off your clothes from your top half. Next, we will explain what will happen.

We will take 2 X-rays of each breast. For each X-ray, we will press your breast between two plates for a few seconds. This is to get a good picture with the least radiation possible.

Although the pressure may be uncomfortable, it does not harm your breasts. You can tell the employee if the discomfort becomes too much. They will work with you to make the screening as pleasant as possible.



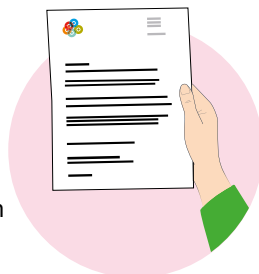
4 Have all the X-rays been taken?

After the screening, you can put your clothes back on and take a seat in the waiting area. The employee will check to make sure the quality of the X-rays is good. If it is, you are all done. If not, the employee will take one or more additional X-rays.

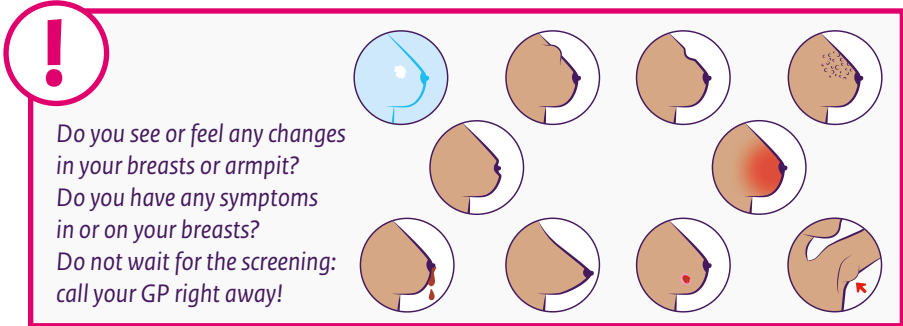
We will send the X-rays of your breasts to two doctors. They will look at your X-rays. You can read more about this on page 10.

5 The result

We will send you a letter with the result within 10 working days. Were you screened on the same day as other people in your neighbourhood? It is possible that not all of you will get the result letter on the same day. This has nothing to do with the results, so there is no need for you to worry.



What should I do if I have symptoms or changes in my breasts?



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Do you see or feel any changes in your breasts or armpit?

Do you have any symptoms in or on your breasts?

Do not wait for the screening: call your GP right away!

Do you see or feel one of the symptoms or changes listed below? Do not take part in the national programme for breast cancer screening. Make an appointment with your GP right away. If you have symptoms after taking part in the population screening, you should also go see your GP.

- You feel a lump, swelling or hardening in your breast.
- You see or feel a bump on your breast.
- There are dents or hollows in your breast.
- The skin on your breast is dimpled and looks like an orange peel.
- You have redness, flaky skin or a nipple turning inside out.
- Blood or fluid comes out of a nipple.
- The size or shape of your breast changes.
- Your breast feels different than usual.
- You have a wound on your breast that is not healing well.
- You feel a swelling in your armpit.

“I am currently being treated or monitored for breast cancer. What should I do?”

You cannot take part in the national programme for breast cancer screening. To cancel your invitation for this round, go to ‘My screening’ at www.bevolkingsonderzoeknederland.nl/en and log in with your DigiD. You can also call or email the Centre for Population Screening. You can find the contact details in the invitation letter.

“I have breast implants. Can I take part?”

Yes, you can take part. We will take your implants into account during the screening. For each X-ray, we will press your breast between two plates. Plastic surgeons say that it is very unlikely that this pressure will damage your implants. That is why they see no reason why you should not take part in the screening. If you have PIP implants, you should ask a specialist to check them before you take part in the screening.

“When is it better not to take part?”

In some cases, it is less useful for you to take part in the population screening. Or a different type of test might be better for you. This could be true if you are very ill and will not get better. Talk to your GP about the best option in your case. You should also talk to your GP if you might be at higher risk of breast cancer because you have certain genes or because breast cancer or ovarian cancer runs in your family.



The population screening is free for you

Taking part in the population screening costs no money. The government pays for the population screening. You may need follow-up diagnostic testing in a hospital. This follow-up diagnostic testing is not part of the population screening. These costs are paid by your healthcare insurer. You may have to pay some or all of the costs yourself. This depends on your excess and how much of it you have already used. If you have any questions about this, please contact your healthcare insurer.

Why do we take X-rays?

X-rays make it possible to look at the tissue inside your breasts. This way, we can find any abnormalities that might be breast cancer. X-rays are still the best way to detect breast cancer.

The earlier breast cancer is detected, the bigger the chance of successful breast cancer treatment.

We use the least radiation possible for each X-ray

When we make X-rays, we use radiation. There is radiation in your daily life, too. We will take 2 X-rays of each breast. We will use the least radiation possible. Radiation can lead to cancer, but that risk is extremely small with the amount used here.



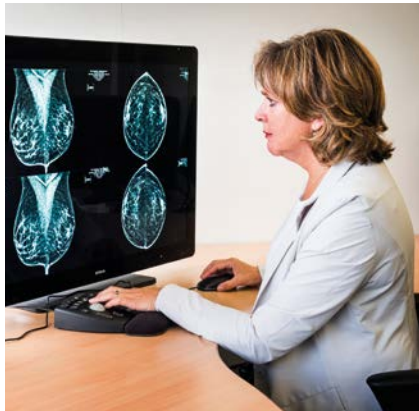
Assessing the X-rays

Two radiologists will look at the X-rays. They are specialists who look for abnormalities on the X-rays. Each radiologist will look at the X-rays on their own. If the two find different results, they will look at the X-rays again.

Secondary findings

The radiologists will look for signs of breast cancer on the X-rays. Sometimes they find something else. This is called a secondary finding. A secondary finding is something that is found by chance. If needed, the radiologists will tell your GP what they found. The GP will then call you to discuss it.

Go to www.bevolkingsonderzoekborstkanker.nl for more information about this.



The screening is most useful if you take part every time

Have you taken part in the population screening in the past? If so, the radiologists will compare the new X-rays with the X-rays from your previous screening. That way, they can see if anything has changed. This can help them find abnormalities early.



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

You decide if you want to take part

Just like any other medical test, the population screening has advantages and disadvantages. For the target group as a whole, the advantages are greater than the disadvantages. But this might not be true for you personally. You decide if you want to take part.

We can detect breast cancer earlier and treat it sooner

The national programme for breast cancer screening makes it possible for us to detect if someone has breast cancer earlier. With early detection, there is a better chance that the treatment is successful. The treatment that you need is often less intensive, too. Women who take part in the population screening regularly are less likely to die from breast cancer than women who do not take part.

You may feel worried

You may be referred to the hospital. This could be because there was an abnormality in one of the X-rays, or because the X-rays did not give us enough information. This does not necessarily mean that you have breast cancer.

You may get treatment when it is not needed

For some people, breast cancer grows so slowly that it will not give them problems as long as they live. As a precaution, people usually choose to be treated for this cancer as well. You always have the right to decide, together with the doctor, if and how you want to get treatment.

The population screening does not give you complete certainty

There is always a chance that breast cancer will be missed. It is also possible that you will get breast cancer between two screenings. That is why it is important to see your GP if you have symptoms in or on your breasts.

Do you not want to take part in the population screening?

Please cancel your invitation. You can cancel your invitation by logging into 'My screening' with your DigiD. The website is www.bevolkingsonderzoek-nederland.nl/en. You can also call us or send us an email. You can find the telephone number and email address in the letter with this leaflet.

What could the result be?

After the screening, we will send you a letter with the result within 10 working days. The following three results are possible:

1. No abnormality found

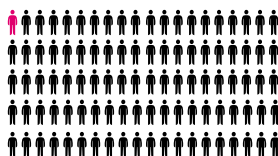
We did not find any signs of breast cancer on the X-rays. You can take part in the population screening again in 2 years. If you get any symptoms in or on your breasts, please contact your GP.



*98 out of 100 participants
get this result*

2. Not enough information

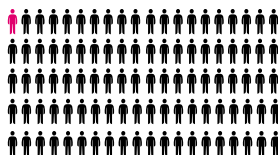
The X-rays did not give us enough information. We will need to examine you further in the hospital. This could mean an additional X-ray or an ultrasound scan. In most cases, there is nothing to worry about.



*1 out of 100 participants
get this result*

3. Abnormality found

The X-rays show an abnormality that could be breast cancer. We will need to examine you further in the hospital. This could mean an additional X-ray or an ultrasound scan. In many cases, we will also remove a small bit of tissue from the breast. This does not necessarily mean that you have breast cancer.



*1 out of 100 participants
get this result*

Your data

To carry out the population screening, we need to process your data. We follow privacy laws when we do this. The municipality has given us your name, address and date of birth. This way, we can send you an invitation. We also process your data for the test and the test results. Our privacy statement explains what happens to your data. For more information about privacy and the privacy statement, go to www.bevolkingsonderzoeknederland.nl/en/privacy.

Your test results can help to improve the population screening. The results from all participants combined give us much information. That is why we also exchange data with research and care facilities. If the material is used for scientific research, we make sure that the researcher does not know to whom the data belong.

We may contact your GP

If we need to examine you further because the X-rays of your breasts did not give us enough information, or because we found an abnormality on one of the X-rays, we will contact your GP. The GP will refer you to the hospital.

You can object

If you do not want your data to be used for quality analysis or scientific research after the population screening, you can object to the Centre for Population Screening. It is important to do this before you take part in the population screening. You can find the contact details in the letter with this leaflet. For more information about how to object, go to www.bevolkingsonderzoeknederland.nl/en/bezwaar.

More information

For more information about breast cancer, the screening and the advantages and disadvantages, go to www.bevolkingsonderzoekborstkanker.nl/vertalingen.

The Centre for Population Screening coordinates the population screening on behalf of the government. Do you have any questions, tips, complaints or compliments about the screening? Please contact the Centre for Population Screening. You can find the telephone number and email address at www.bevolkingsonderzoeknederland.nl/en and in the invitation letter.



“I do not take part in the population screening, because it does not give you complete certainty. It is also possible that you will get something between two screenings.”

“I take part in the population screening, because I see it as extra support in taking care of my body. You check yourself regularly to see if you can feel or see anything, but the screening **can make really sure** if anything is wrong.”

bevolkingsonderzoek

A population screening is a free medical examination for early detection of a disease. The government organises three population screening programmes for cancer: for cervical cancer, breast cancer and colorectal cancer. These diseases can be detected early, even before you get symptoms.

We have paid much care and attention to the content of this leaflet. You cannot derive any rights from it.

Information in other languages

You can read this information in Dutch/Turkish/Arabic/Ukrainian/Russian at:
Bu bilgiyi Türkçe olarak şu internet sitesinde okuyabilirsiniz:

يمكنكم قراءة هذه المعلومات باللغة العربية على الموقع:

Ви можете прочитати цю інформацію українською на веб-сайті:
Вы можете прочитать эту информацию на русском языке на веб-сайте:



www.bevolkingsonderzoekborstkanker.nl/vertalingen

We wrote this leaflet with help from general practitioners (NHG), radiologists (NVvR), screening experts (LCRB), the Dutch Cancer Society, Pharos, the Dutch Breast Cancer Society and the Centre for Population Screening.



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