

# What is a Screening Mammogram?

Why they are important, how to book one, where to go, and what to expect before, during, and after your appointment.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE  
NOVA SCOTIA BREAST SCREENING PROGRAM

## What is a Screening Mammogram?

A screening mammogram is two X-ray pictures of each breast performed by a highly trained mammography technologist.

### WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

A screening mammogram looks for breast cancer in women who do not have breast symptoms. Screening mammograms can find breast cancer in its early stages, even before a lump can be felt. Women with symptoms such as a lump or nipple discharge should see their health care provider immediately to determine if other testing is required.

### HOW DO I BOOK ONE?

You can make the appointment yourself by calling the Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program (NSBSP). You do not need referral from a health care provider to book a screening mammogram.

**902-473-3960 • 1-800-565-0548**

### WHERE DO I GO?

Screening mammograms can be done at one of our 11 fixed sites or 30 mobile stops across the province. Check the NSBSP website for a screening location near you.

**[breastscreening.nshealth.ca](http://breastscreening.nshealth.ca)**

### HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

The appointment usually takes 10 to 15 minutes. Plan to be 15 minutes early to register for your appointment.

### ON THE DAY OF YOUR SCREENING MAMMOGRAM:

- > Bring your health card.
- > Wear a 2 piece outfit with a top that buttons up the front. You will be asked to undress from the waist up.
- > Do not use deodorant, powder, creams or lotions on the day of your appointment. These products may show up on the X-ray picture and make it harder to read your mammogram.
- > Some women find it helpful to avoid caffeine a few days before a mammogram.
- > You may want to take an over-the-counter pain medication one hour before your mammogram appointment if you find mammograms uncomfortable.

## WHO CAN BOOK A MAMMOGRAM?

You do not need a referral from a health care provider to book a screening mammogram. As long as you:

- Are a Canadian citizen
- Are age 40 or older
- Do not have breast implants
- Do not have known breast cancer
- Do not have new breast symptoms

## WHO CAN I CONTACT?

# Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program

### To book an appointment

902-473-3960 (in HRM) or  
1-800-565-0548 (province-wide)

To see the mobile van schedule  
[breastscreening.nshealth.ca](http://breastscreening.nshealth.ca)

### To talk to our Patient Navigator

902-425-2410 (in HRM) or  
1-844-283-0409 (province-wide)

# What can I expect during a Screening Mammogram?

During your 10-15 minute mammogram appointment:

1. You will be asked questions by the mammography technologist such as: the number pregnancies you have had, when you had your first period, if there's a family history of breast cancer, or if you use hormones.
2. You will be asked to remove your clothing from the waist up (You are welcome to wear a shirt or sweater that opens in the front until you are at the mammography machine).
3. The technologist will place your breast on a special X-ray machine.
4. A plastic plate will be used to hold your breast in place for a few seconds. You will be asked to hold your breath while the picture is being taken.
5. You will feel some pressure on your breast during the X-ray. Pressure is necessary to spread the breast tissue and limit movement which may blur the picture. This may be uncomfortable but usually lasts less than 10 seconds.
6. Usually four pictures are taken, two of each breast. Additional pictures may be taken to see the breast tissue properly.

## THEN WHAT HAPPENS?

### Expect Results by Mail

You will receive your screening results by mail. Your healthcare provider will also receive the results.

If the mammogram is normal the letter will tell you when you should have your next screening mammogram. Call in advance to book your next screening mammogram by calling 902-473-3960 or 1-800-565-0548.

### Getting Recalled for Follow-up

It is common for 5-10% of women to be recalled for follow-up appointments.

If additional images are needed, your letter will tell you the time and date of your follow-up appointments. You can discuss your results and ask any questions with your health care provider.

### Important to Keep in Mind

90% of recalled screening mammograms turn out to be normal after further imaging is performed.

Even though more testing is sometimes needed after a screening mammogram, it does not mean you have breast cancer.

