

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why screen for breast cancer?

At present the only way to substantially reduce the number of deaths from breast cancer is to find it at an early stage before it can be felt.

Why have women from this practice been invited?

All women aged 50-70 and 11 months are invited over a three-year period. Each GP practice is invited in turn according to a strict rota.

How will women be invited?

An invitation letter will be sent by the Screening Office. The letter will include information about how to book a breast screening appointment and the "Helping you decide" pink information leaflet (enclosed). An appointment confirmation letter including a map will be sent when requested.

When will women receive their appointment?

Approximately three weeks beforehand.

Can they change their appointment?

Yes - they can phone the office on 01273 664966 or via bsuh.breastscreening@nhs.net.

Have any additional safety measures been taken due to Covid19?

All units have been refurbished and operate a one way system. All staff wear PPE and all equipment and facilities are sanitised between women. A Covid information leaflet is sent out with an appointment letter (copy enclosed).

Can women over the age of 70 still have a screening mammogram?

Public Health England have advised Breast Screening Units no longer to accept self-referrals from women over the age of 70 and 11 months.

If a woman cannot climb steps and so cannot access the mobile unit, what can she do?

She can be screened at The Breast Screening Unit at The Park Centre for Breast Care. If she phones the office on 01273 664966, the staff will arrange this.

If a woman doesn't attend her appointment and then changes her mind later on, what does she do?

She can request another appointment. However, if the mobile unit has moved from your area, she will need to attend in another area or at The Park Centre for Breast Care.

A woman is new to the area. What does she do if she wants a mammogram?

She can call the office to check.

A woman has had a mammogram elsewhere within the last year. What does she do?

It is quite safe to have another mammogram so long as six months have elapsed since her previous one. However, if she decides not to attend this time, she will be invited in three year time. This will keep her in line with other women from the GP practice are invited.

How often will she be screened?

Every three years.

A woman has previously had breast cancer. Does screening still apply to her?

Yes, if she has been discharged from her follow-up care.

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Does screening hurt?

It may be uncomfortable or occasionally painful for a few seconds when each breast is compressed against the x-ray plate. If a woman's breasts tend to become tender at a particular time of the month, she can phone the office to re-arrange the appointment if she wishes.

How long does screening take?

A woman should be on the mobile unit for half an hour or less.

Does a woman need to do anything to prepare for screening?

She should wear suitable clothing as she will need to undress her top half. She should not wear spray deodorant as this can make tiny marks on the x-rays.

Will the staff all be women?

All the staff taking mammograms are women.

How soon do results arrive?

Results should be received within two to three weeks.

Should a woman still examine her breasts herself?

Yes - she should be aware of any changes in her breasts. Breast cancer can develop at any time, including in between screening.

If she finds a change, who should she tell?

She should contact her GP who will refer her to Breast Unit at her local Hospital. The Screening Service cannot screen women with symptoms.

If a woman is invited back for further assessment, what does that mean?

The majority of women invited to assessment do not have cancer. However, the mammograms may not give a complete answer and further investigation is sometimes needed.

What will happen at assessment?

Some extra mammograms may be taken. She will then see a senior specialist doctor who will undertake a clinical examination and possibly an ultrasound. (See enclosed Second Stage Screening leaflet for further information.)

What happens then?

The majority of women are found to be normal at this stage. Some women may need a biopsy to help with a diagnosis. This is usually done at the assessment appointment.

When will she know if she has got cancer?

Depending on the investigations undertaken, she could be discharged with a normal results or she may be asked to come back about ten days later for the results of any tests, to allow for these to be discussed at the Multidisciplinary Team Meeting.

What treatment will she need?

A Clinician will discuss with her treatment options. The treatment of breast cancer has developed significantly and it is in her interest to be aware of all options open to her. A Breast Care Nurse will also spend time with her to make sure she has understood everything. Additional treatment in the form of surgery, radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy may also be needed. The woman will be referred the hospital of her choice, usually her local hospital, to have treatment.

If you or your patient has any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the
Screening Office Team on 01273 664966