

BREAST SCREENING: PRIMARY CARE BRIEFING.

WHAT?

The latest data shows that breast screening uptake has dropped slightly in Scotland so it's essential that all women invited understand the associated risks and benefits.

Eligible women from your practice will shortly be invited for breast screening. This short briefing is here to answer some common questions about the breast screening process – so you and your patients are fully informed – and to give you some suggestions of how you can help reduce the barriers for those invited.

WHO?

The Scottish Breast Screening Programme invites all women aged between 50 and 70 years of age for screening every three years. Advice for women aged over 70 can be found overleaf.

WHERE?

Screening centres are based in Aberdeen, Inverness, Irvine, Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh. Each centre has a static base and provides the screening service to the outlying areas via mobile units.



THE PROCESS

- Screening centres issue invites to women, by GP practice, with an appointment time and location at least two weeks in advance.
- **The mammogram will only take a few minutes and the whole appointment usually takes less than half an hour.**
- All mammographers are women.
- Some women find the process uncomfortable but it's usually only for a few moments while the X-rays are taken.
- Women will normally receive their results within three weeks.
- If a woman doesn't attend, a reminder letter is sent.
- The majority of women will be told their mammograms are clear. A small number will be invited back if it's not adequate quality. Five in 100 women will be invited to the second stage of screening where further tests will be done.

BENEFITS

- 1 in 9 women in Scotland will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime.
- Breast screening can detect tiny cancers before they can be seen or felt, when they're at an early stage.
- **The earlier breast cancer is found the easier it is to treat – you're five times more likely to survive when it's found early.**
- Breast screening saves around 130 lives every year in Scotland.

However, as with any screening programme, there is always an element of risk associated.

RISKS

- **Mammograms don't find all cancers which is why it's important for women to regularly check their breasts for any changes between screenings.**
- There's a possibility of being diagnosed with a cancer that may not have otherwise caused harm so women may have to make some difficult decisions about treatment.
- X-rays used in breast screening rarely cause breast cancer, but having mammograms every three years for 20 years very slightly increases the chance of getting cancer over a woman's lifetime.

FAQ'S FROM WOMEN

How will I know when to go?

When you get your appointment will depend on which GP practice you are registered with, which may mean that you are invited at different times to other women your age.

You should get your first invitation before your 53rd birthday.

I live in a different town/city to where I work – can I change the location of where I get screened?

Yes. If you'd find it easier to attend a screening centre or van near your place of work etc. simply call the number on your invite to rearrange a time and location that suits you best.

Breast cancer doesn't run in my family so I'm not at risk and don't need screened.

This isn't the case. Breast cancer is most common

in women aged over 50 so if you're invited, you should consider attending, even if breast cancer doesn't run in your family.

I'm over 70 years of age but want to be screened, can I?

You're still welcome to take part in screening every three years, although you will not automatically be invited. To make an appointment phone your local screening centre.

I've recently found a lump so would like my breast screening appointment earlier.

If you notice any changes in your breasts between your routine screening appointments you should see your GP – they'll be able to examine you and refer you for additional tests if required.

REDUCING BARRIERS

Practices should encourage shared decision making with patients who are eligible for breast screening. This can be done in a number of ways including:

- Sending teaser letters – alerting women to the facts about screening – before they're due to receive their appointment.
- Using the Detect Cancer Early campaign pack to engage women on the subject when they're in/around the practice (from handing out thingymabooob keyrings, displaying posters/leaflets and showing the Elaine C Smith film on screens).
- Undertaking reminder telephone calls/texts to eligible women.

CONTACT

For more information on how to reduce barriers to screening for women in your practice, contact your local breast screening centre or the Detect Cancer Early team on Diane.Primrose@gov.scot

Breast screening centres:

South East of Scotland – 0131 537 7400

West of Scotland – 0141 800 8800

North East of Scotland – 01224 550 570

South West of Scotland – 01294 323 505

East of Scotland – 01382 425 646

North of Scotland – 01463 705 416