

Please inform the bookings staff when you make your appointment if you have one of these devices.

If you have any other type of medical device implanted, you will need to bring with you to your appointment written confirmation from your specialist that it is safe to have a screening mammogram. BreastScreen SA cannot provide screening without sighting this written confirmation.

How much radiation will I receive?

As extra views will be required, women with implants will receive slightly more exposure to radiation during mammography than women without implants. Even so, the amount of radiation is minimal.

Will having a screening mammogram be painful?

You may experience some discomfort as the implant usually needs to be moved aside to expose the maximum amount of breast tissue. Most women find that this discomfort does not last long. Please tell the radiographer if you feel it is too uncomfortable.

Will I be told if any problems with my breast implants are found?

If a significant new leak or rupture is seen, you and your nominated doctors will be notified. You will be advised to discuss this problem with your doctor, who will refer you to an appropriate service for assessment. **However, not all leaks and ruptures will show up on a screening mammogram.**

Please note: A screening mammogram is not the appropriate test for assessment of your implants.



Do my breast implants make me more likely to develop breast cancer?

Studies of women with breast implants have not been going long enough to answer this, but so far there is no evidence that women with implants are more likely to develop breast cancer.

How often should I have a screening mammogram?

You should discuss this with your doctor. BreastScreen SA screens most eligible women every two years. Some women with either a personal history of breast cancer or a strong family history of breast cancer will be invited for annual screening mammograms.

What else should I do?

It is important for you to be aware of the look and feel of your breasts. If you notice a symptom, such as a lump or nipple discharge, or any other change in your breasts, you should contact your doctor promptly to arrange further investigation.

You are also advised to ask your doctor for a physical examination of your breasts every year.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask your own doctor, or staff at

BreastScreen SA, phone 13 20 50

(cost of a local call)

Free interpreter services and wheelchair access are available

Website: www.breastscreen.sa.gov.au

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Government of South Australia
Central Northern Adelaide
Health Service

Breast cancer screening for women with breast implants (including pacemakers or other medical devices)

BreastScreen

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

A joint Australian, State and Territory Government Program

I have breast implants. Can I come to BreastScreen SA?

Yes. BreastScreen SA provides free screening mammograms at two-yearly intervals, primarily for women aged 50 to 69 without breast symptoms, regardless of whether or not they have breast implants.

However, those women who have a breast implant following surgery for breast cancer are advised to attend their breast specialist for ongoing care, including annual mammograms. Further information for these women is provided in our brochure “Have you had breast cancer in the past?”.

Do I need to mention that I have breast implants?

Yes. If you are making an appointment for a screening mammogram, you should inform the booking staff so that additional time can be allowed to take your x-rays.

If I notice a problem with my breast implants, can I have it checked at BreastScreen SA?

No. BreastScreen SA was established for the early detection of breast cancer, not to check for or to investigate breast implant problems. If you are concerned about your implants you should see your general practitioner or breast specialist as soon as possible for further investigation.

A screening mammogram is not the appropriate test for assessment of your implants.



Can breast cancer be detected in screening mammograms of women with breast implants?

While regular screening mammograms are currently the most effective tool for early detection, they do not cure cancer or prevent breast cancer from developing in the future. Nor are they 100% accurate.

Further, implants can hide some of the breast tissue, making cancers even more difficult to identify. Therefore a woman who becomes aware of a symptom, such as a lump or nipple discharge, or any other change in her breasts, should contact her doctor promptly to arrange further investigation.

Special techniques are required to take a high quality screening mammogram when breast implants are present. BreastScreen SA radiographers are specially trained in these techniques. Your x-rays will be developed and checked before you leave the clinic to make sure that as much breast tissue as possible can be seen. Sometimes repeat x-rays are needed because the implant has moved or more information is required.

Should you decide not to have regular screening mammograms, we advise that you consult your general practitioner or breast specialist regarding other options.

Is it safe for me to have screening mammograms?

Yes. Having a screening mammogram is considered safe for women with implants. However, while damage to an implant during a screening mammogram is rare, there are some risks that you should be aware of:



- There is an extremely small chance that the pressure placed on your implants by the mammography machine could cause an implant to rupture or leak. If your implant has already ruptured or started to leak, it is possible that having a screening mammogram could increase the amount of silicone or saline (depending on the type of implant) spreading into the breast tissue.
- Implants do not last forever. They can deteriorate with time, and may need replacing.
- Sometimes very small amounts of silicone pass through the pores of the implant shell, often called “bleeding” of the implant. At present it is not known whether mammography increases “bleeding” of implants.
- Some women develop unusually hard breasts because the scar tissue surrounding the implant tightens. There is a small chance that having a screening mammogram could cause the scar tissue to crack. This is not harmful in itself. However, your breasts may have a different shape and softer texture afterwards, and each breast may be affected differently.

While the radiographer will take all care and consideration in the performance of your screening mammogram, please note that BreastScreen SA does not accept liability for any change, injury or damage to implants (including pacemakers or other medical devices) or breast tissue, which may result from a screening mammogram.

I have a pacemaker or other medical device. Can I still be screened?

Women with pacemakers or defibrillators can usually still have a screening mammogram. These devices are strong and not easily damaged. Nevertheless, we take extra care and may need to use special techniques to obtain high quality x-rays.

