

Very High Risk Breast Surveillance Screening

The very high risk breast surveillance screening programme provides regular breast screening for women who have significantly higher risk of developing breast cancer and who have been assessed by a specialist in genetics, family history or oncology and are considered at very high risk of breast cancer.

About the programme

You may be eligible if you have been assessed by a specialist in genetics, family history or oncology and are considered Women may have an increased risk of developing breast cancer because of a genetic disorder (usually BRCA) or because they had radiotherapy to their chest when younger.

In September 2020, the programme title was changed to reflect national guidance. Although the title changed from the 'Higher Risk Breast Surveillance Screening Programme' to the 'Very High Risk Breast Surveillance Screening Programme', this does not indicate any increase in cancer risk for those in the programme.

What screening will I be offered?

The type of screening you are offered depends on your age and the reason you are considered to be at very high risk of breast cancer.

You may be offered:

- an annual mammogram
- an annual MRI scan
- both a mammogram and an MRI scan

You may also begin screening at a younger age than women on the routine breast screening programme.

Where will my screening take place?

Most women attend the Specialist Imaging Unit at Antrim Area Hospital for surveillance screening.

If you only require mammography, you may be able to arrange your appointment at your local screening unit for surveillance screening.

I think I may be at increased risk

If you are concerned about your family history or think you may have an increased risk of breast cancer, talk to your GP.

Your GP can refer you to a Family History Clinic, where specialists will assess your risk and decide whether genetic testing or very high risk surveillance screening is appropriate.

Patient information leaflet



Breast surveillance screening for women with a very high risk of breast cancer

This leaflet explains the breast surveillance screening protocol for women with a very high risk of breast cancer.

Last reviewed
05 October 2026

Key contacts

- The Very High Risk Breast Screening Unit at Antrim Hospital may be contacted by email: VeryHighRiskBreastScreening@northerntrust.hscni.net or telephone: [028 9442 4426](tel:02894424426)

Further information

- [Breast screening - an overview | nidirect](#)
- [BRCA Link NI | Support & Information](#) (a voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland helping people to access information and support about BRCA whilst raising awareness. Email: info@brcani.co.uk)
- [The National Hereditary Breast Cancer Helpline](#) (breast cancer genetics)

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