

# Breast screening and breast implants



*Breast*  *Screening*

## **It is important to tell the mammographer carrying out your breast screening if you have breast implants.**

Breast screening by mammography (breast x-rays) can detect cancer at a very early stage. Breast screening reduces the number of deaths from breast cancer.

However, mammography can be less effective in women who have breast implants. This is because the x-rays cannot 'see' through an implant to the breast tissue behind it.

Breast screening usually involves two x-rays of each breast. We take more x-rays if you have implants. This is so we can see as much breast tissue as possible. It is your choice whether to have the extra x-rays. If you want them, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

X-rays can very rarely cause cancer. Having mammograms every 3 years for 20 years very slightly increases the chance of getting cancer over a woman's lifetime.

## Concerns about implants

Screening does not check on your implants. If you think you have a problem with one or both implants, we won't screen you. You need to see your GP who will check whether you need to be referred for further investigations. If your GP says you can have screening, please contact your local screening unit to make another appointment.

Some women know their implants have ruptured but aren't causing a problem. Let the mammographer know as you may still be able to be screened.

Taking breast x-rays involves pressing each breast between two special plates on the x-ray machine. There may be a small risk that the pressure may harm the implant. Only minimal pressure is used, and there is currently no evidence that it can cause a rupture.

For your extra x-rays, only the breast tissue in front of the implant is pressed. There is no direct pressure on the implant at all.

If you are concerned, please talk to the mammographer taking your x-rays.

## Women with implants who don't need screening

If you have had a total mastectomy or a breast reconstruction with a breast implant, then you don't need breast screening. This is because all breast tissue has been removed. If you have only had a total mastectomy on one side, then your other breast can still be x-rayed.

## Being breast aware

All women, with or without implants, should be breast aware. This means knowing how your breasts normally look and feel, and reporting any unusual changes to your doctor as soon as possible.

For more information about breast screening, you can:

- speak to your doctor
- visit [www.nidirect.gov.uk/breast-screening](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/breast-screening)
- read our leaflets *Northern Ireland breast screening: helping you decide* at: [pha.site/helping-you-decide](http://pha.site/helping-you-decide) and *Breast awareness: looking out for changes* at [pha.site/looking-for-changes](http://pha.site/looking-for-changes)

You can also contact your local breast screening unit.

**Belfast Health and Social Care Trust**

(also covering South Eastern HSC Trust)

The Screening Centre  
12-22 Linenhall Street,  
Belfast BT2 8BS  
Tel: 028 9033 3700  
Email:  
breastscreeninglhst@  
belfasttrust.hscni.net

**Northern Health and Social Care Trust**

Northern Area Breast  
Screening and  
Assessment Unit  
Level A, Antrim Area  
Hospital  
45 Bush Road, Antrim  
BT41 2RL  
Tel: 028 9442 4425  
Email: breast.screening@  
northerntrust.hscni.net

**Southern Health and Social Care Trust**

The Breast Screening Unit  
The Maples  
Craigavon Area Hospital  
Lurgan Road, Portadown  
BT63 5QQ  
Tel: 028 3756 0820  
Email: breast.screening@  
southerntrust.hscni.net

**Western Health and Social Care Trust**

The Breast Screening Unit  
Ground Floor, The Nurses' Home  
Altnagelvin Area Hospital  
Glenshane Road,  
Londonderry BT47 6SB  
Tel: 028 7161 1443  
Email: altnagelvin.  
breastscreening@  
westerntrust.hscni.net

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**Public Health Agency**

12–22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.

Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate). [www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

<http://pha.site/breastscreening-info>

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/breast-screening](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/breast-screening)

[www.becancerawareni.info/breast-cancer](http://www.becancerawareni.info/breast-cancer)

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