



# Breast cancer screening for women with implants and piercings

## 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 new symptom, such as a lump or nipple discharge, you should contact your doctor as soon as possible.

## Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions or concerns, you are welcome to contact a BreastScreen SA Medical Officer by phoning 08 8274 7151. Alternatively, you can speak with your doctor.

## BreastScreen SA

Central Adelaide Local Health Network  
Level 1 300 Wakefield Street  
Adelaide SA 5000

Book online: [www.breastscreen.sa.gov.au](http://www.breastscreen.sa.gov.au)

Call us: 13 20 50

Email us: [HelloBSSA@sa.gov.au](mailto:HelloBSSA@sa.gov.au)



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by BreastScreen SA's Consumer Group for consumers and the community.

If you do not speak English, request an interpreter from SA Health and the Department will make every effort to provide you with an interpreter in your language.



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

Most women who have breast implants can have a screening mammogram.

Women who have a breast implant following surgery for breast cancer within the past 5 years should see their breast specialist for ongoing care.

## **What if I have injectable fillers in my breasts?**

If you have had injectable fillers, you are not eligible for screening with BreastScreen SA. Injectable fillers – such as free silicone injections, hyaluronic acid (Macrolane) and polyacrylamide gel (PAAG) – reduce the amount of visible breast tissue and make it more difficult to see cancers.

If you have had injectable fillers, we can provide advice about more appropriate breast imaging.

## **Do I need to mention that I have breast implants?**

Yes. Please advise us at the time of booking so that we can allow additional time for your appointment.

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

No. BreastScreen SA only provides screening mammograms for the early detection of breast cancer. A screening mammogram is not an appropriate test for assessing breast implants.

If you are concerned about your implants, you should see your doctor.

## **Is it safe for me to have a screening mammogram?**

Yes. Having a screening mammogram is generally considered safe for women with implants.

Special techniques are required to take high-quality images when breast implants are present, and our radiographers are specially trained in these techniques.

You will also need extra images taken to ensure as much breast tissue as possible can be seen.

While damage to an implant during a screening mammogram is rare, there are some risks that you should be aware of.

There is a very small chance the pressure placed on your implants during mammography could cause a 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.

There is also a small chance that mammography will change the shape or appearance of the breast implants. The breast may also feel softer after mammography.

## **How much radiation will I receive?**

Screening mammography uses a very small dose of radiation. As extra images will be required, women with implants will receive slightly more exposure to radiation during mammography than women without implants.

The amount of radiation is still minimal and the benefits of screening outweigh any concern about the slightly increased radiation exposure.

## **Can breast cancer be detected in women with breast implants?**

While regular breast screens are the most effective way of screening for breast cancer early, a screening mammogram will not detect all breast cancers.

Implants can also hide some of the breast tissue and make cancers more difficult to identify. If you become aware of a change in your breasts, such as a lump or nipple discharge, you should contact your doctor as soon as possible.

## **Will the screening mammogram be painful?**

No. You may experience some discomfort as the implant usually needs to be eased 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 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 doctor will be notified. You will be advised to discuss this problem with your doctor.

## **I have a nipple piercing or sternal piercing. Can I be screened?**

Most women with nipple piercings and sternal piercings can have a screening mammogram.

For women with piercings overlying their breastbone, we take extra care and may need to use special techniques to obtain high-quality images. You may experience some additional discomfort during screening and there is a very small risk of minor injury or bruising to the skin around the piercing. If this occurs, you will be treated at the clinic and given follow-up care advice.

## **How often should I have a screening mammogram?**

BreastScreen SA screens women every 2 years. Some women with a personal or strong family history of breast cancer will be invited for annual screening.