

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

Yes. BreastScreen SA (BSSA) provides free screening mammograms every two years primarily to women aged 50 to 74 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. For more information, see our brochure *Have you had breast cancer in the past?*

Do I need to mention that I have breast implants?

Yes – please advise our booking staff so that additional time can be allowed for your appointment.

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

No. BSSA only provides screening mammograms for the early detection of breast cancer. We do not to check or investigate breast implant problems. If you are concerned about your implants, you should see your general practitioner or breast specialist.

A screening mammogram is not an appropriate test for assessing breast implants.

Can breast cancer be detected in women with breast implants?

While regular breast screens are currently the most effective tool for early detection, they do not cure cancer or prevent breast cancer from developing.

Like many tests, they are not 100% accurate, meaning that in a very small number of women not all breast cancers will be found.

Implants can hide some of the breast tissue, making 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.

Special techniques are required to take high-quality images when breast implants are present. BSSA radiographers are specially trained in these techniques. You may also need extra images taken to ensure as much breast tissue as possible can be seen.

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 during mammography 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.

While our radiographers take all care and consideration when performing your screening mammogram, please note that BSSA 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 be screened?

Women with pacemakers or defibrillators can usually 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 images.

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

If you have any concerns, or any other type of medical device implanted, you will need to contact your specialist to check that it is safe to have a screening mammogram.

How much radiation will I receive?

Screening mammography uses a very small dose of radiation. As extra views will be required, women with implants will receive slightly more exposure to radiation during mammography than women without. Even so, the amount of radiation is still minimal and the benefits of screening are considered to outweigh any concern about the slightly increased radiation exposure.

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 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 doctor 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.*

A screening mammogram is not an appropriate test for assessing breast implants.

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

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. BSSA screens most eligible women every two years. Some women with either a personal history or strong family history of breast cancer will be invited for annual screening.

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, you should contact your doctor as soon as possible to arrange further investigation.

For more information

**BreastScreen SA
SA Health
Telephone: 13 20 50
www.breastscreen.sa.gov.au
BSSAenquiries@health.sa.gov.au**

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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Government
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SA Health



Breast cancer screening
information for women
with breast implants

(including pacemakers and
other medical devices)



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