

Mammography

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is a low-dose x-ray examination performed using a dedicated mammography x-ray unit. Mammograms are used to examine breast tissue and can detect breast cancer before you show any visible signs or symptoms of the disease.

Do I need to prepare for my mammogram?

Please do not apply any talcum powder or deodorant before your mammogram, as they contain substances that can alter image quality, and can sometimes even mimic pathology. If possible, please wear a two-piece outfit, as this will make you more comfortable throughout the examination process.

Please bring any previous mammogram images with you to our appointment. These images may be used for comparison and are extremely helpful in determining minute changes that may have occurred in this region of the body.

It is also recommended that you reach out to your relatives to see if they have ever been diagnosed with breast cancer, or have had tumours or other health-related issues in the chest region. This helps to form a more accurate picture of your family history as it relates to breast cancer or other related diseases.

It is also helpful if they can provide any information about their diagnosis, including their approximate age at first diagnosis.

When you arrive for your appointment, you will be required to complete a questionnaire detailing your presenting symptoms and any known family history.

What happens during a mammogram?

You will change into a gown and remove any clothing on your top half. A radiographer will take you into the mammography room and thoroughly explain the procedure and what will be expected of you. This includes a demonstration of the equipment that will be used.

During a mammogram, your breast tissue is compressed between the mammography unit's paddle and detector. Compression is necessary as it increases image detail, reduces radiation dose, and prevents blurring that may be caused by movement. You may experience some discomfort, but this will only last for a few seconds while the image is being taken. Please let your radiographer know if you experience pain at any point during your scan.

A routine mammogram is usually performed in a standing position. At least two images of each breast will be taken in different positions.

Once the scan is complete, your images will be viewed by a radiologist to ensure no further imaging is needed. Extra images may need to be taken in other positions so all suspicious appearances can be investigated thoroughly. This also ensures the radiologist can be confident in their report and findings.

Are there any risks associated with a mammogram?

All measures are taken to limit the radiation dose for mammograms. All routine images are checked with the radiologist prior to any subsequent imaging being performed. Please keep in mind your doctor believes that the benefit of having this examination performed outweighs the very small risk to your health that is caused by exposing your body to this low dose of radiation.

How long will my mammogram take?

A total of 60 minutes should be sufficient to allow for your complete mammogram examination.

A mammogram is quite a quick procedure; however, you should allow at least 30 minutes for your first examination. This ensures that there is adequate time for a detailed explanation of the procedure to be given, changing as well as sufficient time for the images to be checked with a Radiologist to ensure that no further views are required.

If you also require a breast ultrasound, this will take a further 30 minutes.

How much will my mammogram cost?

The cost of a mammogram depends on whether you meet Medicare criteria for a rebate. Please discuss your eligibility for a rebate with your referring doctor before you book an appointment.

BreastScreen Australia provides free screening mammograms for women over the age of 40 every two years. These are performed at dedicated government breast screening clinics. If you choose to have this mammogram done at Qscan, an out-of-pocket fee will apply.

Our Customer Service Team will be able to advise you of all costs involved with your mammogram including any out-of-pocket costs.

After your mammogram, your report and images will be sent to your referring doctor. They will also be available electronically via the patient app and web portal.