



BreastScreen
Aotearoa

Your breast screening journey



[TimeToBreastScreen.nz](https://www.timetobreastscreen.nz)

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Why regular breast screening matters

As wāhine, we give so much of our time and energy to our whānau, our hoa (friends), our mahi (work). We are pillars of strength, nurturers, providers. But sometimes we forget to take time for ourselves to stay on top of our hauora (health). By booking our mammograms, we're not only giving our breasts the attention they deserve, we're also being role models for our whānau and hoa.

While time is precious, making time for breast screening can mean finding signs of breast cancer early. It's easier to treat when small and you're more likely to survive.

It could be a life-saving appointment that takes just 15 to 30 minutes of your time, once every two years.

Breast cancer affects many wāhine Māori. By choosing to screen every 2 years as part of your hauora journey, you're honouring and protecting your whakapapa for yourself, your tamariki and your whānau.



This breast plate design is a symbol of strength, protection and mana. Being so close to the heart, it reminds us of the resilience and leadership of wāhine Māori across generations. In breast screening, the breast plate becomes a modern expression of hauora – showing that caring for ourselves is an act of courage and aroha for our whānau. Each mammogram is not just a check, but a declaration of leadership, ensuring our tamariki and mokopuna see hauora as a taonga to be nurtured and protected.

By screening regularly, wāhine Māori continue the legacy of strong, thriving generations.



What is breast screening?

Breast screening means having a mammogram – a type of x-ray that helps find cancer early, when it's easier to treat.

BreastScreen Aotearoa offers free mammograms every two years for women aged 45 to 69.

The age range for free breast screening is being extended for women aged 70 to 74. Go to **TimeToBreastScreen.nz** to find out more.

Breast screening is your choice

While screening is free with BreastScreen Aotearoa, if you don't wish to participate in this programme, you can still arrange a private mammogram through your doctor. If you opt out of screening with BreastScreen Aotearoa it's easy to re-join at any time, providing you remain eligible. Just freephone **0800 270 200**.

Enrolling and booking your FREE breast screen is so easy

You can enrol, book or change your appointments with our new online system - Te Puna. When you're due for your mammogram, you'll be sent a secure personalised link or QR code via email, text or letter.

If you prefer, you can also speak with one of our BreastScreen Aotearoa kaimahi (workers) via our freephone number.

If you think you're eligible for free breast screening, but haven't received an invitation, you can talk with your healthcare provider, freephone **0800 270 200**, or scan the QR code below to sign up for your 2-yearly mammogram.



Things to let us know

We can support you best when we understand your needs – and can even make extra time for your appointment if helpful.

When arranging your booking, we will ask if you:

- are (or may be) pregnant
- have breast implants
- are on hormone replacement therapy/menopause hormone therapy
- have a medical or cardiac device like an insulin pump or a pacemaker
- have noticed any changes to your breasts within the last 12 months
- have had a mammogram in the past 12 months.



Need more support?

If you let us know when making your appointment, we can offer more support for mobility limitations, and for physical, mental, learning or sensory impairments.

Translation or sign language support can also be provided for your appointment if you let us know these are needed.

Screening Support Services are available for wāhine Māori in many areas to assist with bookings and attending appointments. To find a list of services in your area visit **TimeToBreastScreen.nz**, freephone **0800 270 200**, or scan the QR code below.

Some Māori healthcare providers in your area may also offer support.



Getting ready for your mammogram

Now that you've joined this hauora journey, here's everything you need to know about your upcoming mammogram.

Where does it happen?

You can have your mammogram at locations throughout Aotearoa, including mobile screening units. Where available, the mobile units move through the regions to make breast screening even easier to access, particularly for wāhine living in rural areas.

To find out when a mobile unit will be in your area, visit **TimeToBreastScreen.nz**, freephone **0800 270 200**, or scan the QR code below.

Many breast screening locations are wheelchair accessible.



On the day of your appointment

Wear a top and a skirt or pants as you will need to remove your top and bra.

Don't wear anything like deodorant, perfume, moisturiser, oil, fake tan, body makeup or powder, as these can affect the x-ray image. If you forget, just tell the mammographer and they'll give you a cloth to wipe it off.

If you wear jewellery or taonga, you may need to move or remove it for your mammogram. You can keep them in your pocket if you want them close.

You're welcome to bring a family member or friend to support you before and after your mammogram.



What happens during your mammogram?

Your appointment will take around 15-30 minutes. The mammogram itself usually takes around 10 minutes but it's always good to give yourself extra time just in case there's a short wait.



When you report to reception you'll be asked to complete a form.

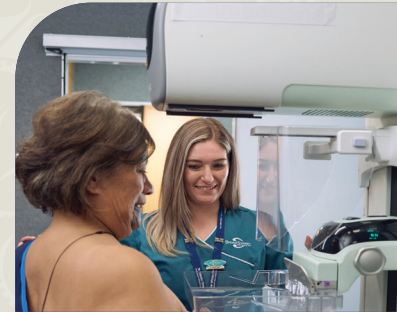
You'll be shown to a changing room where you'll need to remove your top and bra.



You'll be given something to cover your top half. You are also welcome to bring your own covering as long as it doesn't have metal buttons, clasps or zips.



Our female mammographer will show you into the mammography room where a minimum of four images of your breasts will be taken.



To ensure that the best image is captured our mammographer will need to help you position yourself and your breasts. They'll ask your permission first and guide you through the process.



If at any time you feel uncomfortable, speak up and let them know - you have the right to control what happens to your tinana (body).



You may feel some discomfort or pressure on your breasts during the process as two plastic plates press together on your breast for a short time.



Please ask questions at any time - we want to make the experience as comfortable for you as possible.

After your mammogram

Your mammogram will be carefully checked by two expert radiologists and results sent within three weeks. These will also be sent to your doctor or hauora provider, unless you let us know at your appointment that you don't wish this to happen. Please freephone **0800 270 200** if your results do not arrive.

If you've been asked to return for more tests

If your pictures aren't clear or we see something we want to check again, you may be asked to come back.

Wāhine mā, we know this may be worrying for some, **but it doesn't mean anything is wrong.**

It may help to know that for every 100 women screened through BreastScreen Aotearoa, around five are called back for more tests. Out of those five, four will not have cancer. One may be diagnosed – and if so, finding it early gives the best chance of treating it successfully.

So, while feeling a bit worried is natural, **you are taking a powerful step** – for your health, your whānau, and your future.

No matter the outcome, we're here to support you every step of the way.



Have more questions?

We're here to help. Freephone us on **0800 270 200** or visit **TimeToBreastScreen.nz**

Celebrate your strength

You're doing something truly important by giving your breasts the attention they deserve. Share the message with the wāhine in your life – encourage your sisters, mums, aunties, friends and whānau to prioritise their health by booking their free mammograms too!

For wāhine of all ages, it is important to take the time to learn the normal look and feel of your breasts. Some signs and symptoms to check for may include:

- a new lump in the breast or armpit
- changes to the breast shape or size
- changes to the skin of the breast such as dimpling, puckering, or thickening
- changes in the nipple, such as turning inwards, ulcers, or a new itch
- nipple discharge or bleeding
- persistent redness
- pain in the breast that does not go away.

Get any new changes checked by your healthcare provider as soon as possible.

What happens at a follow-up appointment?

Our team will have carefully checked your mammogram and will identify anything that needs a closer look.

You might have one or more of these tests:

- A more detailed mammogram – to zoom in or see the area from another angle
- An ultrasound scan – to create a picture of the inside of your breast
- A physical breast examination – done by a healthcare professional, such as a doctor or nurse
- A biopsy – a tiny sample of tissue is taken (under local anaesthetic) to be looked at more closely under a microscope.

We'll talk you through the process and make sure you understand each step.

If you need a biopsy, it's usually done the same day, though the results will take longer to come back. In some cases, you may need more tests or treatments later on, but we'll explain everything if that applies to you.



***Kia kaha, kia māia,
kia manawanui
Be strong, be brave,
be steadfast***

What happens next?

Sometimes, you'll get some results on the day. Full results – especially if a biopsy is done – will be sent directly to you by BreastScreen Aotearoa within a few weeks.

If cancer is found, Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora will support you through assessment and treatment.

Your rights

You have rights before, during and after your breast screen to:

- be treated fairly and with respect
- be treated with dignity and independence
- be provided with support and care that suits you
- be informed in a way you understand
- be informed about your health
- make choices about your care and support
- have a support person or people accompany you to your appointment
- decide if you want to be part of training, teaching or research
- make a complaint.

It is the responsibility of BreastScreen Aotearoa to provide the best care possible. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or unhappy with the care you have received please speak up so we know. It's so important to us that you keep coming back for your regular mammograms, so if there is an issue we will do everything we can to fix it.

You can find out more about your rights at hdc.org.nz/your-rights

You are not alone

If you feel a bit worried, that's okay, have a good kōrero with someone you trust – your partner, a whānau member, or a friend. You can also speak with a BreastScreen Aotearoa kaimahi at any time.

This journey is about more than just screening – it's about protecting yourself, your whānau, and your future.

Need more information or want to talk with someone from BreastScreen Aotearoa? Visit **TimeToBreastScreen.nz** or freephone **0800 270 200**.



Manaakitanga Charter

- 1 We will acknowledge you when you enter any of our spaces**
This helps get over the awkwardness of new spaces and people. So, we'll say hi, introduce ourselves so you feel welcomed.
- 2 We will always use your name**
Your NHI number is not who you are, you're more than that. Your name is a gift and we will use it throughout your appointment.
- 3 We will always encourage you to ask questions**
Understanding what's going on will help you make informed decisions. If you have questions or are unsure about anything, please ask any of our team and they will answer them as best as they can.
- 4 We will protect your modesty**
Your body is sacred and we will offer you something to cover up with while waiting.
- 5 We will be present with you**
We all have demands on our time, but while you are with us, we will listen and engage with you throughout the process because you deserve that.
- 6 We will always say thank you**
Just as saying hello is important, we will always acknowledge when you leave, because in two years time you will return again. But if you have questions before then, you can always get in touch.



**Ngā mihi nui –
thank you for choosing to screen**

Notes

TimeToBreastScreen.nz

**Freephone
0800 270 200**



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