

18pt



**BreastScreen
Aotearoa**

Screening for breast cancer: joining BreastScreen Aotearoa

BreastScreen Aotearoa

Adapted in 2026 by Accessible Formats Service,
Blind Low Vision NZ, Auckland

Transcriber's Note: The logo at the top of the page is BreastScreen Aotearoa and a circle with "Time to screen" inside.

This information is from BreastScreen Aotearoa.

BreastScreen Aotearoa is New Zealand's free national breast screening service that checks for signs of breast cancer.

If you have any questions after reading this information phone us on **0800 270 200**. If you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech impaired or find it hard to talk, you can use the New Zealand Relay Service.

www.nzrelay.co.nz

Breast screening and cancer

Breast screening means having a mammogram every two years to check for signs of breast cancer. Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in New Zealand.

Screening saves lives by finding breast cancers before there are even any symptoms.

Most breast cancers are curable if found and treated early before they can grow or spread.

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is a type of x-ray. It is a digital picture that shows the inside of your breast to check for any signs of breast cancer. During a mammogram, each breast is pressed firmly between two plates for up to a minute so clear pictures can be taken.

For information about what happens during a mammogram please read or listen to our resource having a mammogram. This is available at <https://bit.ly/4ta9Mkx>

Page 3

Mammograms are done at clinics and mobile units throughout New Zealand. Anyone who is eligible is automatically invited to enrol and participation is free.

Early detection is your best protection.

Joining BreastScreen Aotearoa and booking your mammogram

If you are eligible and due for a mammogram with BreastScreen Aotearoa, you should receive an invitation via email, text or letter. You can enrol and book:

- online using the secure personalised link in your invitation
- call us on 0800 270 200. If you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech impaired or find it hard to talk, you can use the New Zealand Relay Service.
www.nzrelay.co.nz

If you think you are eligible but have not received an invitation, please let us know by calling us or by completing the enrolment form available at <https://bit.ly/3QnVs9t>

Am I eligible?

You are eligible to participate in BreastScreen Aotearoa if all of the points in the list below apply to you:

- are a woman aged 45 to 69 or qualify for the extended age range up to age 74
- have no symptoms of breast cancer
- have not had a mammogram in the last 12 months
- are not pregnant
- are entitled to public health services in New Zealand
- have been free of breast cancer for at least 5 years

There is an online calculator to check your eligibility by age. The calculator is not in alternate formats and may not be accessible. If you need help to access it, you can ask a family member, friend or your GP. You can find the calculator at <https://bit.ly/4sol4iM>.

If you are not eligible, talk with your doctor or hauora provider about your personal risk of breast cancer. Also look for any signs of breast cancer and talk with your healthcare provider as soon as possible if you notice changes to your breasts. If you are breastfeeding, please make this known to your screening provider when making your appointment.

For more information about who can receive publicly funded personal health and disability services in New Zealand, go online to <https://bit.ly/4vwOSh1>

Extending the age for breast screening

BreastScreen Aotearoa is extending the age for free breast screening, beginning with women aged 70 and 74. Each October the age range will be extended by one year until all eligible women aged 70 to 74 are included. This will be fully in place by October 2029.

Page 3

All of New Zealand (excluding Nelson and Marlborough)

From October 2025 you are eligible for:

- a free mammogram every two years until you turn 75, if you turn 70 on or after 1 October 2025
- one final screen at age 74, if you are 70 to 74 before 1 October 2025.

Nelson and Marlborough

From October 2024, if you live in Nelson and Marlborough, you are eligible for:

- a free mammogram every two years until you turn 75, if you turned 70 on or after 1 October 2024
- one final screen at age 74, if you are 70 to 74 before 1 October 2024.

Go online to <https://www.timetobreastscreen.nz> or call us to find out more about these changes.

It's your choice

You can choose whether to participate in BreastScreen Aotearoa.

You can opt out of the programme at any time. You can also rejoin at any time, as long as you remain eligible.

If you decide not to participate in the programme, you or your healthcare provider can still arrange your mammograms, but they may not be free, and results will not be recorded with BreastScreen Aotearoa.

To help you decide, more information is provided online at <https://www.timetobreastscreen.nz>. You can also talk with your doctor, nurse or hauora provider or call us on 0800 270 200. If you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech impaired or find it hard to talk, you can use the New Zealand Relay Service. www.nzrelay.co.nz

If you need support to arrange or attend appointments, help is available. There are Māori or Pacific providers available in some areas.

Find out about Screening Support Services at <https://bit.ly/41AfMqG>

What you need to know

Screening saves lives

Mammograms help find cancer as early as possible by showing changes inside the breast before anything can be felt.

You are more likely to survive breast cancer, and treatments may be easier, when cancers are found early and are small.

Page 4

In New Zealand, women found to have breast cancer through screening are less likely to die from it than those who find breast cancer and are not in the screening programme.

Screening has reduced deaths from breast cancer by one third. More information about this is online at

<https://bit.ly/4sCAAJe>

Most people who develop breast cancer have no family history of it. This is why it's important to be aware of any changes to your breasts and to have regular mammograms regardless of your family history.

If you do have a family history of breast cancer, you may have a slightly higher risk.

The likelihood of breast cancer also increases with age.

Less treatment

Finding breast cancer early can mean it's easier to treat, using options that people may cope with better.

This is particularly important for older women, who may also have other serious health conditions to manage.

A proven method of finding cancer

For women who participate in screening, mammograms find eight or nine out of 10 cancers.

It is still important to look for any changes to your breasts between mammograms and to talk with your healthcare provider about any new changes immediately.

Some cancers may not harm you

Mammograms can find small breast cancers that would not be found if you were not screened. Some of these cancers may never grow enough to become life threatening.

For a small number of older women who have other serious health conditions, some breast cancers found through screening will not become harmful during the remainder of their lifetime.

Because it is not possible to tell which cancers will become harmful, treatment is offered for every cancer found.

Treatment options can be discussed with your specialist.

Contact us

If you have any questions after reading this information phone us on **0800 270 200**. If you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech impaired or find it hard to talk, you can use the New Zealand Relay Service.

www.nzrelay.co.nz

For general enquiries about screening email

screening@health.govt.nz

**End of Screening for breast cancer: joining
BreastScreen Aotearoa**