

SCREENING FOR BREAST CANCER



Embætti
landlæknis
Directorate of Health

Screening invitation

An average of 235 Icelandic women (in most cases older than 50) are diagnosed with breast cancer every year. You are aged between 40-74 and have been invited to attend breast cancer screening.

This brochure provides further information on screening, allowing you to decide whether to respond to the invitation.

The health authorities recommend the screening based on a comprehensive assessment of useful and harmful effects. It is, however, important that you make up your own mind.

Self-examination of breasts is also an important preventative measure. Women who regularly examine their own breasts tend to notice if anything has changed. You should contact a physician immediately if you find a lump during self-examination.

Seek the advice of a physician regarding this screening invitation if you are already undergoing treatment for a breast disease.

If you are not sure when your last screening was, you can seek information about your most recent screening on www.heilsuvera.is (view your electronic medical file) or obtain information from your healthcare centre.

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These guidelines are based on Danish guidelines, *Tilbud om screening for brystkræft*, issued by the Danish Health Authority (Sundhedsstyrelsen), 2018.

Photos: listockphoto.com/

What is screening?

Breast screening is an examination of symptom-free women.

The purpose of the screening is to diagnose the disease during its early stages, offer better treatment options and prevent women from dying from breast cancer.

Screening is not a comprehensive investigation of breast cancer, and even if you undergo screening, you may have or get breast cancer. As a result, you must always contact a physician if you become aware of symptoms.

Further information on how to book an appointment can be found on the site

<https://www.heilsugaeslan.is/serthjonusta/samhaefingarstod-krabbameinsskimana/>.

You may cancel your participation if you do not want to receive information or be screened. Even if you decide not to participate, you will still have the option to undergo screening and receive treatment if you so request or have need for such services.

Advantages

- **Lower breast cancer mortality rates:** Simpler treatments are available when cancer is diagnosed early. When you undergo screening, you are also reducing the risk of dying from breast cancer.
- **Simpler treatment:** When cancer is diagnosed early, you are more likely to be able to undergo simpler and less invasive surgery (segmental mastectomy) and avoid armpit lymph node removal.
- **Reduced risk of needing drug therapy:** At the same time, there is less risk that you will need to undergo drug therapy after surgery if the cancer is detected early.

Disadvantages

- **False positive screening:** If your screening results give rise to suspected breast cancer, you will be invited for further examination. This does not necessarily mean that you have breast cancer. The reason may be benign changes in the breasts or dense breast tissue. This is called a false positive result, which may lead to considerable distress and anxiety while waiting for the results.
- **Overtreatment:** Screening may show a mass in the breast, which would not otherwise have had an effect on your life. When you participate in screening, therefore, there is a risk that you will receive unnecessary treatment, which could have harmful effects.
- **Anxiety:** The wait for results can cause fear and anxiety. Seek the advice of a nurse if you experience anxiety.
- **False sense of safety:** Even if no breast cancer is suspected after the screening procedure, you may have, or get, breast cancer. The screening image may be what has been termed a false negative, i.e. does not discover a malignancy that is present. As a result, it is important that you regularly perform a self-examination of your breasts.
- **Discomfort:** Some women experience some discomfort and pain during the screening process, as the breast is compressed during the examination.

Screening procedure

The screening process involves taking an x-ray of both breasts (mammogram). A radiographer performs the examination, while radiologists examine your images. If there is no suspicion of breast cancer after the screening, you will receive an invitation for a new screening after 2 years.

If there is suspicion of breast cancer after the screening, you will receive an invitation for further examination (clinical breast examination).

Breast implants do not usually interfere with the performance of breast screening. This may depend, however, on the positioning of the implant, i.e. whether it is front or behind the pectoral muscles.



Further checks

If cancer is suspected after screening, you will be invited for further examination (clinical breast examination) within 14 days. A physician will carry out such examination, usually by means of an ultrasound examination. It may be necessary to take additional x-rays and aspiration or take a tissue sample.

If you decline the clinical breast examination, you will still be invited for a new breast screening appointment after 2 years.

TWO POSSIBLE RESULTS FROM FURTHER EXAMINATION (CLINICAL BREAST EXAMINATION)

- **No sign of cancer:** Nothing abnormal was seen in your breasts. The reason for such suspicion may be the result of benign changes or dense breast tissue. You will be invited for next screening after 2 years.
- **You have cancer:** If breast cancer is discovered, you will be referred to the physicians of Landspítali University Hospital for further treatment.

PREGNANT WOMEN / BREAST-FEEDING WOMEN

- Breast screening is not recommended for symptom-free women during pregnancy and not until three months after cessation of breast-feeding.

Screening statistics

Breast cancer statistics in Iceland 2015–2019

- An average of 235 women with breast cancer are diagnosed yearly
- The average age when diagnosed is 62 years.
- An average of 50 women die each year.

Where do I book an appointment for breast screening?

The Co-ordination Centre for Cancer Screening is responsible for inviting women for screening and accepts screening appointment bookings.

You can make an appointment by phone on 513 6700, between 08:30 and 12:00, Monday–Friday.

Alternatively, you can send an e-mail to krabbameinsskimun@heilsugaeslan.is.

All results from screenings can be found on [Ísland.is](http://island.is) / Mínar síður. They are also expected to be posted on Heilsuvera.is / Mínar síður.

Where are the screenings performed?

Screenings in the Greater Reykjavík Area take place in the Breast centre at Eiríksgata 5, 3rd floor.

Akureyri Hospital is responsible for breast screenings in North-Iceland.

QUESTIONS AND INFORMATION

If you have any questions regarding breast screening, you can ask your physician or contact the following websites:

www.heilsuvera.is • Healthcare centre and the Directorate of Health.

www.heilsugaeslan.is • Co-ordination Centre for Cancer Screening

www.krabb.is • The Icelandic Cancer Society