



Early detection through mammography

Early breast cancer detection –
improved chances of recovery

What you should know about breast cancer

In Switzerland, breast cancer is the most frequent form of cancer and the main cause of cancer deaths in women aged between 50 and 70 years. Each year about 5,400 women are diagnosed with breast cancer and more than 1,350 die from the disease. The chances of survival and recovery from breast cancer are considerably greater if it is diagnosed early and treated appropriately with less aggressive measures.

Find out about the advantages and disadvantages. You can then decide if you want to participate or not.

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. Mammograms can detect even very small tumours, long before they can be felt by hand or diagnosed as a result of other symptoms.

Who can take part in a screening programme?

All women over 50 who live in a canton where a breast cancer screening programme is available (as well as cross-border commuters with Swiss health insurance) are entitled to have a screening mammography every two years regardless of their nationality or residential status.

How should I prepare myself for a mammography?

- If you still have regular periods you should arrange a screening appointment for the first few days after your period when your breasts are less sensitive.
- A health questionnaire is enclosed with your invitation. Please fill it in and bring it to your appointment.
- Wear a top that is easy to remove, as you will need to strip to the waist for the breast X-ray.
- You should not apply any deodorant, talcum powder, body lotion or perfume to your breasts or armpits.

What happens during a mammogram

- Even though the actual X-ray only takes a few minutes, you should allow about 20 to 30 minutes for the whole appointment.
- For the X-ray to be as clear as possible, each breast is pressed between two plates for a few seconds. The procedure may feel unpleasant, but it only lasts a short while.
- The X-rays are checked independently by at least two radiologists. For this reason there is no consultation with a doctor at the time of the screening.

When and how will I get the result?

You and the physician of your choice – if indicated on your health questionnaire – will be informed of the result in writing within eight working days.

When are further tests necessary?

- Most mammograms do not reveal anything unusual
- However, about 4–5% do. In these cases further procedures are necessary to establish the nature of the changes seen. In general an ultrasound check or more specific X-rays exams will be performed. In most cases, the changes seen are benign and you will be re-invited to have a screening mammography in two years' time.

Advantages and disadvantages of mammography in a breast cancer screening programme

A mammography within a quality-controlled screening programme is currently the recommended method for the early detection of breast cancer in women aged 50 years and above. Age is the greatest risk factor for developing breast cancer in women aged 50 years and above. As in any other medical procedure, the advantages must be weighed up against the disadvantages. Experts agree that the benefits outweigh any risks.

Advantages in a nutshell

Mammography allows **early detection**: even very small tumours can be detected that have usually not yet spread. This increases the chances of survival and recovery.

Early detection of cancer allows **less aggressive and more effective treatment**.

This reduces side effects and **improves the quality of life**.

Early detection and an improved range of treatments have helped to **reduce the mortality rate of breast cancer**.

Women who take part in a breast cancer screening programme benefit from the constantly monitored **high quality** of the examination.

Disadvantages in a nutshell

A malignant tumour that would not have affected a woman's life may be diagnosed (**overdiagnosis**). At present the behaviour of tumours at an early stage cannot be accurately predicted. This is why all malignant tumours are treated.

Abnormalities in the mammograms will be followed up to determine the nature of the changes. These are normally benign, i.e. there is no breast cancer. This is known as a **false positive result**.

Interval cancer is breast cancer found in the two years between screening mammograms. When a mammography is judged to be normal, although breast cancer is present, this is known as a **false negative result**.

It is possible that a tumour will be detected at a stage where **the course of the disease can no longer be influenced**. In such an event the woman has to live longer with the knowledge of her breast cancer.

The risk from **exposure to radiation** for women aged 50 years and above is considered to be much lower than the benefits of screening.

It is important that you obtain all the information you can before you make a decision about participation. We will be pleased to provide you with a detailed information brochure. Any questions can be addressed to the breast cancer screening programme of your canton, the cancer hotline, cantonal cancer leagues or your attending physicians.

Screening mammography cannot prevent cancer. It is very important that women observe their breasts closely and consult a doctor if they notice any changes.



How do you make an appointment for the screening mammography?

- You can reply to our invitation: 50- to 69-year-old women will receive a written invitation every two years to make an appointment for a screening mammography; women aged over 70 years may also take part in the screening programme at their own request or on the recommendation of a physician.
- You can call one of the participating radiology institutes where you wish to have the mammography performed.
- You can make an appointment online: www.mammografiescreeningbasel.ch
> Terminverwaltung
- Do you need help making an appointment? Then please call the programme centre of the Basel Cancer League directly on 061 319 91 70.
- Have your mammography now.

Costs of the examination

Your basic health insurance will cover the costs, except for an excess of 10%, i.e. approximately CHF 20.00 that you will have to pay.

Make an appointment today.

A comprehensive information brochure is available in several languages and can be downloaded free of charge from www.mammografiescreeningbasel.ch:

 German	 Albanian	 Spanish
 French	 Macedonian	 Turkish
 Italian	 Portuguese	 Serbo-croat-bosnian
 English		

Further information

www.swisscancerscreening.ch

MAMMOGRAFIE-SCREENING KANTON BASEL-STADT

Mammografie-Screening Kanton Basel-Stadt
Mittlere Strasse 35, 4056 Basel

Telefon 061 319 91 70, Telefax 061 319 91 79
info@mammografiescreeningbasel.ch
www.mammografiescreeningbasel.ch

A Basel Cancer League programme for the canton Basel-Stadt.