

Breast screening for women with implants



BreastScreen
Victoria

Caring about Women

BreastScreen Victoria specifically targets women aged 50 to 74 years, and is FREE for all women over 40 with no breast symptoms. If you have breast implants, this fact sheet may answer some of your questions about having a breast screen.

Can I have a breast screen if I have implants?

Yes. Most women who have breast implants can have regular breast screens every two years. **Before** making an appointment you may wish to discuss with your doctor whether breast screening is suitable for you. Implants make it harder to see breast tissue on standard mammograms. Additional images will be needed to show as much breast tissue as possible. You will need a slightly longer appointment (approximately 20 minutes).

Will it hurt?

You may experience some discomfort as the implant usually needs to be moved back to expose the maximum amount of breast tissue. Most women find that this discomfort does not last long. If you experience pain during the breast screen, please let the radiographer know. You may also ask for the procedure to stop at any time.

Will all breast cancers be found?

Breast screens can find most breast cancers present at the time of screening but, like other medical tests, they are not 100% accurate. Breast implants can cover some of the breast tissue, which may make it more difficult to find small breast cancers.

Is it safe for me to have regular breast screens?

Breast screening is generally safe for women with implants. However, it is important that you consider the risks alongside the benefits before deciding to attend BreastScreen. The risks are:

- There is an extremely small chance that the pressure placed on the implant during the breast screen (mammogram) could cause the implants to rupture or break.
- In women who have implants which have already ruptured or started to leak, it is possible that having a breast screen could increase the amount of silicone or saline (depending on the type of implant) spreading into the breast tissue.
- In some women with implants, very small amounts of silicone or saline (depending on the implant) pass through the pores of the implant shell. This is sometimes called 'bleeding' of the implant. At present it is not known whether breast screening increases 'bleeding' of implants.
- There is a small chance that breast screening will change the shape of the breasts by dispersing the fibrous capsule that often grows around the implant. The breast may feel softer after screening. However, it cannot be guaranteed that both breasts will be affected equally.
- Because of the extra views required, women with implants will experience more exposure to radiation during breast screening than women without implants.

Will I be told if any problems are found with my implant?

Yes. You will be notified in your results letter if a new possible abnormality with your breast implants is found. However, not all leaks and ruptures will show up on a breast screen. You will be advised to discuss this with your doctor.

If I notice a problem with my implants, can they be assessed through BreastScreen Victoria?

No. If you notice a problem with your implants please see your doctor as soon as possible. Implant problems will not be assessed by BreastScreen Victoria.

If I have a breast implant, am I more likely to develop cancer?

At present there is no evidence that women who have breast implants are more likely to develop breast cancer.

How often should I have a breast screen if I have implants?

You should discuss this with your doctor. BreastScreen Victoria offers free breast screens every two years. Whether or not you have regular breast screens, it is important for all women to get to know their breasts and what is normal for them. If, at any time, you notice an unusual change in your breasts such as a lump, pain or discharge from the nipple, please visit your doctor without delay.

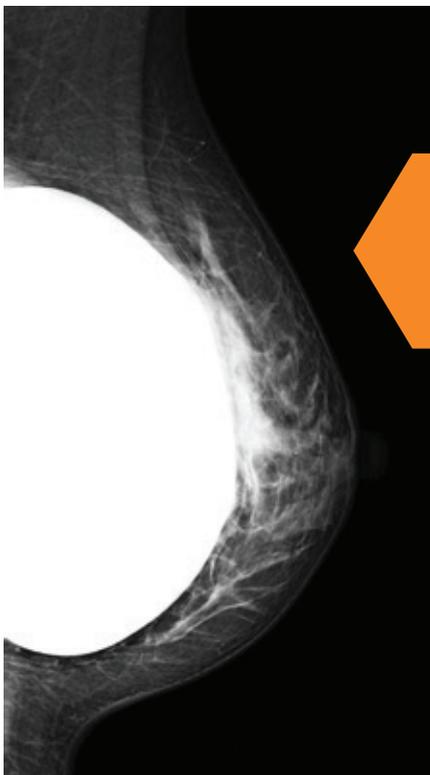


Image shows the implant in place. The implant covers some of your breast tissue.

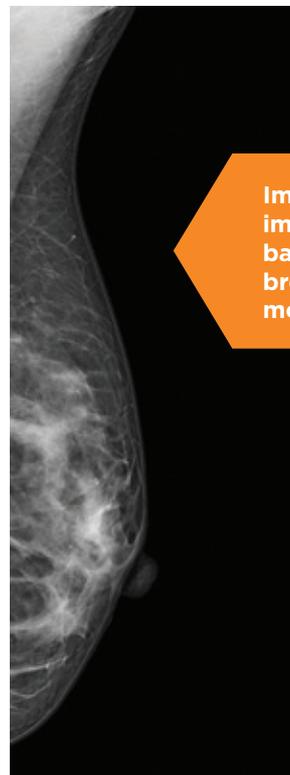


Image shows the implant pushed back allowing your breast tissue to be more clearly seen.

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For interpreter assistance call **13 14 50**



Translated information: breastscreen.org.au/translations

TTY 13 36 77 if you have hearing or speech difficulties



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