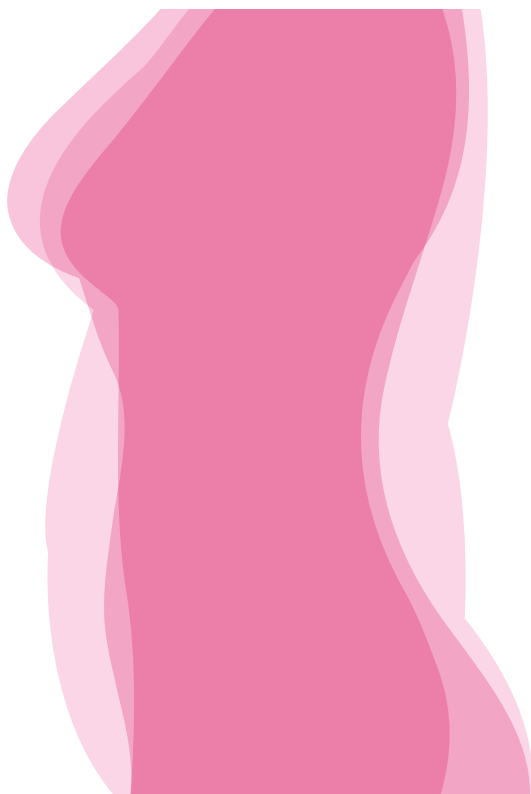


NHS Breast Screening Programme

Breast implants and breast screening



It is important to tell the radiographer carrying out your breast screening if you have breast implants.

Breast screening by mammography (breast x-rays) can detect cancer at a very early stage. Breast screening reduces the number of deaths from breast cancer.

However, mammography can be less effective in women who have breast implants. This is because the x-rays cannot 'see' through an implant to the breast tissue behind it.

Breast screening usually involves 2 x-rays of each breast. We take more x-rays if you have implants. This is so we can see as much breast tissue as possible. It is your choice whether to have the extra x-rays. If you want them, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Concerns about implants

Screening does not check on your implants. If you think you have a problem with one or both implants, we won't screen you. You need to see your GP who will check whether you need to be referred for further investigations. If your GP says you can have screening, please contact your local screening unit to make another appointment.

Some women know their implants have ruptured but aren't causing a problem. Let the radiographer know as you may still be able to be screened.

Taking breast x-rays involves pressing each breast between 2 special plates on the x-ray machine. There may be a small risk that the pressure may harm the implant. Only minimal pressure is used, and there is currently no evidence that it can cause a rupture.

For your extra x-rays, only the breast tissue in front of the implant is pressed. There is no direct pressure on the implant at all.

If you are concerned, please talk to the radiographer taking your x-rays.

Women with implants who don't need screening

If you have had a total mastectomy or a breast reconstruction with a breast implant, then you don't need breast screening. This is because all breast tissue has been removed. If you have only had a total mastectomy on one side, then your other breast can still be x-rayed.

Being breast aware

All women, with or without implants, should be breast aware. This means knowing how your breasts normally look and feel, and reporting any unusual changes to your doctor as soon as possible. We advise following the 'touch look check' (TLC) 3 simple steps:

TOUCH your breasts. Can you feel anything unusual?

LOOK for changes. Is there any change in shape or texture?

CHECK anything unusual with your doctor.

For more information about breast screening, you can:

- speak to your doctor
- visit www.nhs.uk/breast
- read our leaflet 'Breast screening: helping you decide' at:
www.gov.uk/phe/breast-screening-leaflet

For contact details of your local NHS breast screening unit visit:

www.nhs.uk/breastscreening

Find out how Public Health England and the NHS use and protect your screening information at:

www.gov.uk/phe/screening-data

To opt out of screening see:

www.gov.uk/phe/screening-opt-out

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