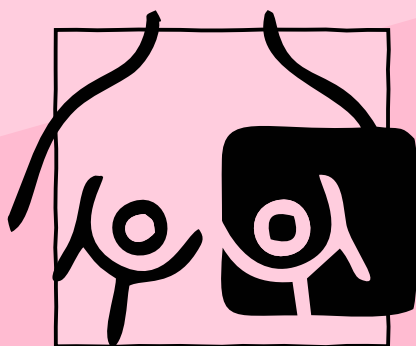


Taking part in breast screening



Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet provides information for people experiencing homelessness across London on how to participate in breast screening.

The information might also be helpful for key workers and/or service providers who support people experiencing homelessness to access healthcare services.

What is breast screening?

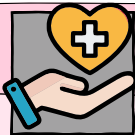
Screening is a way of identifying people without symptoms who may have an increased risk of a particular health issue. The NHS offers a range of screening tests which are **free**.

Breast screening uses a test called a **mammogram**, an x-ray that checks for early signs of breast cancer.



Your risk of getting breast cancer increases as you get older. Most breast cancers are found in women aged over 50. More women now survive breast cancer than in the past.

Breast screening is a way of finding breast cancer. It can help find cancers that are too small to see or feel.



Breast screening can save lives.



Many people survive breast cancer if they know they have it – 75% of people diagnosed with breast cancer are still alive 10 years later.



96% of people who have breast screening show no signs of cancer and will not need screening for another 3 years.

Who is breast screening for?



Breast screening is offered automatically to people aged 50 up to their 71st birthday who are registered with a GP as female. This includes:

- Trans women and non-binary people assigned male at birth who are on long-term hormone therapy.
- Trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth who have not had double mastectomy or top surgery.

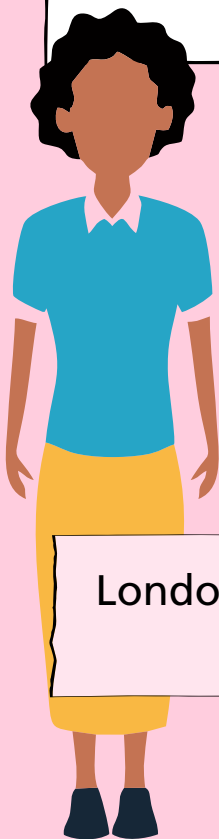
Breast screening is not routinely offered to people registered with a GP as male who are aged 50 up to their 71st birthday but they can request screening via the GP practice. This includes:

- Trans women and non-binary people assigned male at birth who are on long-term hormone therapy.
- Trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth who have not had double mastectomy or top surgery.

You will be invited every 3 years (you will receive your first invitation sometime between your 50th and 53rd birthday).

If you are aged 71 or over, you are still at risk of breast cancer. Although you will no longer automatically get screening invitations after your 71st birthday, you can still have breast screening every 3 years. You can call the London Breast Screening Hub and book into your local screening unit.

If you have not been invited or missed your last appointment, you or someone on your behalf (with your consent) can call the London Breast Screening Hub number to schedule an appointment.



London Breast Screening Hub
020 3758 2024

AGE

71



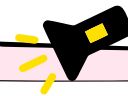
50

How does breast screening work?



- You will receive a letter in the post which will give you a date, time and location of where to have your breast screen. This can be changed if it does not work for you. This takes place at either the local hospital or mobile screening van.
- If you need extra help or wheelchair access, you can ask for a special appointment.
- The test is carried out by a female mammographer (a healthcare professional who takes the x-rays).
- Before you continue, the mammographer will confirm your name, address and date of birth.
- You will then be asked to undress to the waist but can cover yourself with your top until it's time for your screening.
- One at a time, your breasts will be placed onto the mammogram machine and a plastic plate will hold it in place. This x-ray will only take a few seconds but might feel a little uncomfortable. If you find it painful, tell the mammographer.
- Your visit to the screening unit or mobile screening van including your mammogram can take up to about half an hour.
- You will then receive a letter within two weeks with your screening results.

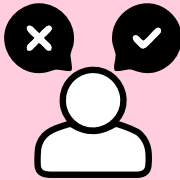
Top tips



- Wearing clothing where you can easily remove the top part and keep your lower items on (e.g., trousers or skirt) might make you feel more comfortable.
- Try not to wear deodorant as this can interfere with imaging.

Why should I do it?

Finding out about a problem early can mean that treatment is more effective.



Finding out you have a health problem, or an increased chance of a health problem can help you make better informed decisions about your health.

Deciding whether or not to have a screening test is a personal choice and one which only you can make.



If you complete your breast screening, you may not need to do anything else until you're next invited or your results may say further tests are needed.

Practice breast awareness between your screening appointments (see page 10).

- If you need further tests, you will be given an appointment. You will usually get your results within one week.
- You may feel anxious about having further tests and what this means. Your letter will tell you how to contact a breast care nurse if you have any questions or would like to discuss the process.

Most people who need further tests will not be diagnosed with breast cancer. But if there are signs of breast cancer, finding it early means treatment is more likely to be successful.

How can I take part in breast screening?

You need to be registered with a GP surgery to access screening. To do this, you or a trusted person can download the family doctor services registration form (GMS1), fill this out by hand, and hand it into the GP surgery:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gms1>.



Remember

Everyone has the right to access healthcare. You do not need ID or a fixed address to register with the GP and your immigration status does not matter.

It is important that the GP has accurate information for you, in particular:

- **Your name**
- **Your date of birth**
- **Your gender**
- **Your contact details e.g. mobile number and an agreed address for your health letters to go to, e.g. care of (c/o) address.**



Your breast screening invitation will be a letter sent to the address you provide to your GP surgery.

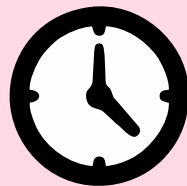


A text reminder will be sent to the mobile number your GP surgery has on record to remind you of your upcoming appointment.

If you do not wish to be invited for breast screening, you can contact the London Breast Screening Hub on **020 3758 2024**.

Managing my appointment

You can change your appointment and/or location based on what is convenient for you (e.g., if you struggle to sleep, an early morning appointment may be a challenge). You or a trusted person can ring the London Breast Screening Hub to change the time, date or location on **020 3758 2024**.



If you struggle to remember appointments, you could:

- ask a friend, or support worker to remind you.
- set an alarm or reminder on your phone.

Plan your route in advance and allow time so you don't feel rushed. Speak to a local support service or key worker if you need help to attend – they may be able to help.



Ask a trusted friend or support worker to either attend the appointment with you or to be available to chat after. If you feel anxious, it can be a good distraction knowing someone can talk to you while you wait.

Requesting a visit to the screening site before your appointment can help reduce anxiety, by speaking to the team and seeing the equipment beforehand to help familiarise yourself.

Remember the health professionals keep anything you say confidential. It may help to share any physical or mental health challenges or disabilities so they can support you. They can help position your breasts on the machine to your comfort.

Helping you decide

No screening test is 100% reliable. There are pros and cons to consider before taking part.

Doctors cannot always tell if a cancer will go on to be life-threatening or not. So, treatment is always offered if you're diagnosed with breast cancer.

- this means some cancers that are diagnosed and treated would not have been life-threatening, so treatment of non-life-threatening cancers is the main risk of breast screening.

Other risks of breast screening include:

- a cancer being missed – mammograms do not always find a cancer that is there.
- x-rays – having a mammogram every 3 years for 20 years gives you a very slightly higher chance of getting cancer over your lifetime.

Most people feel the benefits of breast screening outweigh the possible risks.



You can discuss any aspect of the screening test with a health professional and decide whether or not it is right for you.

This guide and the invitations sent to you by the breast screening programme give you information to decide whether or not you want to be screened – **it is your choice.**

Check your breasts

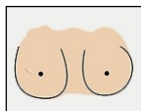
In between your breast screening appointments, it's important to practice breast awareness and to get to know how they usually look and feel. There is no right or wrong way to check your breasts. Remember **TLC**:

Touch your breasts, can you feel anything unusual? Remember to feel both breasts and under the armpits, all the way up to the collar bone.

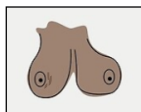
Look for changes, is there any change in the size or shape of your breasts? Does anything look different?

Check anything unusual with your doctor.

Some changes to look out for during breast awareness include:



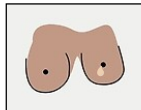
lump – you may be able to feel a lump but not see it



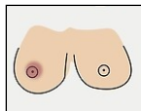
a change in the look and feel of the skin – this can be a bit like orange peel



a change in the appearance or direction of a nipple



discharge (liquid) from one or both of your nipples



redness or rash on the skin or around the nipple

If you notice any changes in your breasts or chest, you should tell your GP.

What other information do I need to know?



- ✓ If you change your name, address or phone number, let the GP surgery know.
- ✓ When updating your address, you can provide contact information of your key worker as a second contact.
- ✓ If you move to a new location, you can register with a different GP surgery.
- ✓ If you do not have a fixed address, you can ask your GP surgery to update your records with their address.

If you have any questions or worries, please call the London Breast Screening Hub number **020 3758 2024** or ask a trusted person to assist.

[An easy read guide to breast screening \(NHS\)](#)

[Breast Screening: Helping you decide \(NHS\)](#)

[How should I check my breasts? \(NHS\)](#)

You can also visit the [London Breast Screening](#) website for more information



**Scan the QR code for more information on
breast screening**

Acknowledgements

This leaflet has been produced by Groundswell in partnership with the North Central London Cancer Alliance, RM Partners North West and South West London Cancer Alliance, North East London Cancer Alliance, South East London Cancer Alliance and the NHS England (London Region) Cancer Screening Commissioning Team.

Image credits

Page 4: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/breast-screening-helping-women-decide>

Page 9:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/649d988606179b00113f7569/An_easy_guide_to_breast_screening_June23.pdf

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