breast screening explained
The Scottish Breast Screening Programme has been part of NHSScotland for more than 10 years. Breast cancer is more common in women aged over 50; therefore, all women aged 50 and over are eligible for routine breast screening. Breast screening involves taking x-rays of the breast. These are called mammograms.
Breast cancer can affect any woman. Breast cancer affects 1 in 10 women in Scotland at some time in their life. It is known that if breast cancer is found at an early stage, treatment has the greatest chance of being successful. The best way of screening for breast cancer is by having regular mammograms, as you may not be able to see or feel any early changes to your breasts.
how is breast screening organised?

If you are aged between 50 and 70, you will be routinely invited for mammograms every three years. If you are aged 71 or over, we would still encourage you to attend for screening every three years by contacting your screening centre to request service (see page 8).

For women aged 50-70 invitations are sent by post in batches based on the GP practice with which they are registered. This means that you may not receive an invitation immediately when you reach your 50th birthday. A neighbour, who is registered with another GP practice, may be called at a different time. If you are unsure when women registered with your practice are due to be called, please contact your screening centre (see page 8).
Where do I attend breast screening?

Breast screening is carried out at a screening centre or in a mobile screening unit. Your invitation will advise you where to attend.
Breast screening is a straightforward procedure which the mammographer will explain to you. This involves positioning and compressing each breast in turn in the x-ray machine. Some women find this procedure uncomfortable and a few may find it painful, but it will not do any harm to your breasts. The compression will last for only a few seconds and is necessary to produce the best quality mammogram. Mammography involves a tiny dose of radiation; the risk to health from this is very small. The mammographer will be happy to answer any questions you may want to ask about the examination.
Your whole visit will last approximately 20 minutes.
Mammography is the most reliable way of detecting breast cancer early. Like other screening tests, it is not perfect, as a very small number of cancers may not be seen on the mammogram. Because it is very important to ensure that the quality of the service offered to women is as high as possible, a range of checks are in place to make sure that everything is running as it should be and that all women receive safe and reliable care.

Your mammograms will be reported by specialist staff. Normally, you will receive your result by post within three weeks of your appointment. Your GP will also be notified of the result. Most women will then simply be invited again three years later as part of the routine screening process. If you have any concerns in between your routine scheduled screening appointments, you should see your GP. Do not wait for your next screening appointment.

what will happen after my breast screening mammograms?

how accurate is breast screening?
A small number of women will be called back to the mobile unit or screening centre for repeat mammograms, if the original mammograms are not considered to be of adequate quality. This is known as a Technical Recall appointment.

A few women may require further tests and will be invited to attend an Assessment Clinic at the screening centre. Most of these women will then be reassured and will simply be invited back for routine screening three years later. For women who are diagnosed with breast cancer, finding it early gives the best chance of successful treatment. The treatment options will be fully discussed with you and arrangements agreed for your referral to a specialist breast team.
The Scottish Breast Screening Programme Screening Centres: Locations and Areas Covered

1 North Scotland
Highland Breast Screening Centre
Raigmore Hospital
Inverness IV2 3UJ
Tel: 01463 713222
Fax No: 01463 705567
covers Highland, Western Isles NHS Boards and Forres part of Grampian NHS Board.

2 North East Scotland
Breast Screening Centre
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary
Foresterhill Road
Aberdeen AB25 2XF
Tel: 01224 550570
Fax No: 01224 553713
covers Grampian, Orkney and Shetland NHS Boards.

3 West Scotland
Breast Screening Centre
Stock Exchange Court
77 Nelson Mandela Place
Glasgow G2 1QT
Tel: 0141 572 5800
Fax No: 0141 572 5801
Text Phone: 0141 572 5858
covers Greater Glasgow, Lanarkshire and Argyll and Clyde NHS Boards. Also part of Forth Valley NHS Board (including Aberfoyle, Callander, Stirling, Tillicoultry, Dollar and Alloa).

4 South West Scotland
Breast Screening Centre
Ayrshire Central Hospital
Kilwinning Road
Irvine, Ayrshire KA12 8SS
Tel: 01294 323505/6/7
Fax No: 01294 277104
covers Ayrshire and Arran and Dumfries and Galloway Health Boards.

5 East Scotland
Breast Screening Centre
South Block level 7
Ninewells Hospital
Dundee DD1 9SY
Tel: 01382 425646
Fax No: 01382 425647
covers Tayside NHS Board and part of Fife NHS Board covering North East Fife (including, Cupar, East Neuk and St. Andrews).

6 South East Scotland
Breast Screening Centre
Ardmillan House
42 Ardmillan Terrace
Edinburgh EH11 2JL
Tel: 0131 537 7400
Fax No: 0131 537 7420
covers Lothian and Borders Health Boards. Also part of Forth Valley NHS Board (including Falkirk, Grangemouth and Slamannan). Part of Fife NHS Board (including Markinch, Dunfermline, Glenrothes and Leven).
This information is available in alternative languages and formats. Please contact Health Scotland or your local NHS Board for further details.