

Having a mammogram

Introduction

Please telephone and let us know if you have limited mobility and are unable to stand, as you will need a longer appointment time for the X-ray.

Please bring with you: your appointment letter or your X-ray request card.

A radiographer (X-ray practitioner) specialising in mammography will greet you in the waiting area and carry out the examination.

A relative or friend may accompany you to your appointment; however, no childcare facilities are available.

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an X-ray examination of the breast which is carried out using purpose-built specialised equipment.

Why do I need a mammogram?

You may have been seen by the hospital breast consultant having been referred by your GP and a mammogram may have been requested to provide additional information for the consultant.

Alternatively, you may have been invited for a mammogram as part of the National Breast Screening Programme. The Breast Screening Department will automatically invite women to attend for a mammogram when they reach the age stipulated by the programme.

Are there any risks with this test?

There are no risks involved when having a mammogram. The radiation is kept to a very low dose and this is because the breast is made up of soft tissue only.

What happens during the mammogram?

You will be asked to undress to the waist and stand up close to the machine. Your breast will be positioned by the radiographer and will be pressed tightly by a perspex plate lowered onto the breast. This may be slightly uncomfortable but should not be painful.

The pressure is essential to obtain detailed pictures, and is held for only a few seconds while the X-ray is taken. Pictures are usually taken with the breast in two different positions.

You will be asked to wait while the radiographer checks the films to make sure that all the breast tissue is seen clearly. The examination will take between 10 and 15 minutes. A female radiographer who is specially trained in this field will carry out the examination.

After the mammogram

You will have no long lasting effects from having a mammogram. You may have a slight redness to the skin as a result of the applied pressure but this will disappear very quickly. You may also feel some tenderness which may be reduced by taking your usual pain relief.

Results

A report of your examination will be sent to your referring doctor; if this is a hospital specialist, then the specialist will contact your GP with the report.

If you have been invited by the Breast Screening Programme, your GP will be sent your results and you will also receive a copy. Should you be required to return for a further consultation, your letter will contain an appointment.

You will receive another invitation for breast screening in a further three years.

Further information

www.nhs.uk/Conditions/breast-cancer-screening/Pages/what-happens.aspx

www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/breastscreen/publications/ia-02.html

More information is available on the Trust website:

www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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