

Why screen for breast cancer?

At present the only way to substantially reduce the number of deaths from breast cancer is to find it at an early stage before it can be felt.

When will women from this practice been invited?

All women aged 50-70 will be invited over a three-year period. Each GP practice is invited in turn according to a strict rota agreed with the local Primary Health Care Agency.

How will women be invited?

An appointment letter will be sent by the Screening Office. The letter will include information about breast screening and a map to show the location of the mobile screening unit.

When will women receive their appointment?

About four weeks beforehand.

Can they change their appointment?

Yes - they can phone the office on 01903-239757.

If a woman cannot climb steps and so cannot access the mobile unit, what can she do?

She can be screened at Worthing Hospital. If she phones the office on 01903-239757, the staff will arrange this.

If a woman doesn't attend her appointment and then changes her mind later on, what does she do?

She can request another appointment at any time so long as it is more than six months before her next invitation. However, if the mobile unit has moved from your area, she will need to attend in another area or at Worthing Hospital. She should then attend her next regular appointment to get her back in line with the Practice.

A woman is new to the area. What does she do if she wants a mammogram?

The Screening Office routinely contacts women who have moved into the area every three months unless their GP practice is about to be screened. She can call the office to check.

How does a woman know if she will be called by the Screening Programme?

Provided a woman is registered with a GP practice, then her details will be downloaded to the Screening Office from the Primary Health Care Agency as outlined above.

A woman has had a mammogram elsewhere within the last year. What does she do?

It is quite safe to have another mammogram so long as six months have elapsed since her previous one. However, if she decides not to attend this time, she will not be invited for another three years from the current appointment. This will keep her in line with other women from the GP practice.

How often can she be screened by the Screening Service?

Every three years.

A woman is over 70. Can she still have screening?

Yes she can still be screened every three years but she will need to contact the Screening Office herself to arrange this.

A woman is under 50. Can she be screened?

Not by the Breast Screening Service at present. If she has noticed any change in her breasts, she will need to discuss this with her GP who may refer her to a local Breast Care Centre if this is necessary.

Are any women not invited for screening?

Women who have had a bilateral mastectomy are not invited, provided their GP has advised either the Primary Health Care Agency or the Screening Office.

Please turn over:

Can a woman opt out of the Screening Programme at her own request?

Yes - a woman can choose to opt out of the Screening Programme by asking the Screening Office to send her a "Disclaimer Letter" for her signature and return. Unless this has been received, the Screening Office is obliged to continue to send appointments.

A woman has previously had breast cancer. Does screening still apply to her?

Yes, if she has been discharged from her follow-up care.

Does screening hurt?

It may be uncomfortable or occasionally painful for a few seconds when each breast is compressed against the x-ray plate. If a woman's breasts tend to become tender at a particular time of the month, she can phone the office to re-arrange the appointment if she wishes.

How long does screening take?

A woman should be on the mobile unit for half an hour or less.

Does a woman need to do anything?

She should wear suitable clothing as she will need to undress her top half. She should not wear spray deodorant as this can make tiny marks on the x-rays.

Will the staff all be women?

All the radiographers are women, both on the mobile units and at the hospital. Some of the medical staff and administrative staff are male.

How soon do results arrive?

Results should be received within three weeks.

Should a woman still examine her breasts herself?

Yes - she should be aware of any changes in her breasts. Breast cancer can develop at any time, including the intervals between screening.

If she finds a change, who should she tell?

She should contact her GP who will refer her to see a Breast Surgeon at Worthing Hospital. The Screening Service cannot screen women on demand.

If you call her back for assessment after screening, what does that mean?

It usually means that we have seen a change in her x-rays compared with those taken last time. The majority of women recalled do not have cancer. However, the films may not give a complete answer and further investigation is sometimes needed.

What will happen at assessment?

Some extra mammograms may be taken. She will then see a senior specialist doctor who will undertake a clinical examination and possibly an ultrasound.

What happens then?

The majority of women are found to be normal at this stage. Some women may need a biopsy to help with a diagnosis. This is sometimes done at the assessment appointment but most women will need to come back on another day.

When will she know if she has got cancer?

Depending on the investigations undertaken, she could know the same day or she may be asked to come back about ten days later.

What treatment will she need?

Her consultant will discuss with her all the treatment options. The treatment of breast cancer has developed significantly and it is in her interest to be aware of all options open to her. A Breast Care Nurse will also spend time with her to make sure she has understood everything. Additional treatment in the form of radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy may also be needed.

**If you or your patient have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact
the Screening Office Team on 01903 239757**