Where can I get help?

- Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any questions about your screening mammogram result.

- Call us at 1-866-727-3926 or visit our website screeningforlife.ca for:
  - general information about the Alberta Breast Cancer Screening Program
  - copies of our other brochures "*Do I Really Need a Mammogram?*" and "*Basics of Breast Cancer*"

- Call a friend! An abnormal result does not mean you have cancer, but it can be stressful.

Remember

- Most abnormal results are not breast cancer.

- Having follow-up tests is important.

- The earlier cancer is found, the better the chance that it can be treated.

- The breast cancer death rate has gone down in Alberta since 1990, likely due to an increase in screening mammograms and improvements in treatment.

About the Alberta Breast Cancer Screening Program

The Alberta Breast Cancer Screening Program (ABCSP) is coordinated by Alberta Health Services in partnership with the Alberta Society of Radiologists. The ABCSP mails your screening mammogram results to you.

To get letters from the ABCSP your name and address must be up to date with Alberta Health and Wellness; call 310-0000 (toll free) then dial 780-427-1432.

Screening is one of the best things you can do for yourself to find breast cancer early. Breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screening saves lives.

For more information, please contact
Cancer Screening Programs
Phone: 1-866-727-3926
Fax: 1-888-944-3388
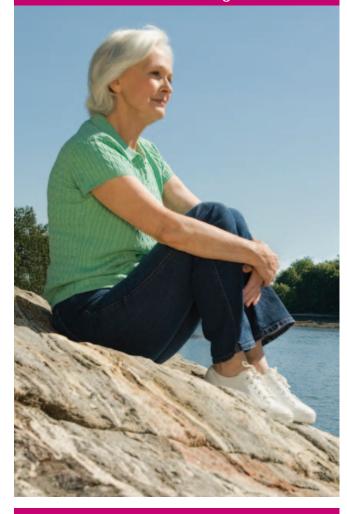Web: screeningforlife.ca

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Alberta Health Services

Alberta Breast Cancer Screening Program

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BREAST SCREENING
Making Sense of Abnormal Mammogram Results

SCREENING FOR LIFE.CA

What does an abnormal result mean?

An abnormal result means you need more tests. About 7% of women who have a screening mammogram are asked to get more tests. It's important to remember that only a small percentage of these women are diagnosed with breast cancer.

Why do I have an abnormal result?

There are many reasons why your mammogram result may be abnormal. Most of the time the reason is not cancer. Other more common reasons for an abnormal result are:

- fluid-filled sacs (cysts). Up to 60% of women will have these at some point in their lives
- small solid nodules that are not cancer (fibroadenomas)
- small calcium deposits (benign calcifications)

These are not dangerous and are not cancer.

What other tests might I need?

Other tests you may need will depend on the type of abnormality that was found. The results of these tests will help determine what, if any, treatment you might need. Extra tests may include:

Clinical Breast Examination

A clinical breast exam is a thorough physical examination of your breasts and nearby lymph nodes. Your healthcare provider will check for lumps, obvious differences between your breasts, skin thickening or dimpling, and nipple discharge.

Diagnostic Mammogram

Diagnostic mammograms are special x-rays of the breast that provide more images than a screening mammogram. Diagnostic mammograms focus on the area that seemed abnormal in the screening mammogram or on your clinical breast exam.

Ultrasound

Ultrasound uses sound waves to create an image of your breast. It shows whether a breast lump is fluid-filled or solid.

Biopsy

A biopsy involves removing a small sample of tissue from the abnormal area for further study in the laboratory.

What do I do now?

All women with an abnormal screening mammogram result should be followed-up carefully. Call your healthcare provider right away to make an appointment to talk about the tests you need. Your healthcare provider will have a copy of your results and may have called you already to make an appointment.

Having an abnormal mammogram can be stressful. Remember that 9 out of 10 women who go for extra tests do not have breast cancer. If you do have breast cancer, finding it early gives you more choices. The earlier the cancer is found, the more likely the treatment will work well.

You may find it helpful to:

- write down your questions and bring them with you to your appointment
- write down the answers so you can look back at them later
- take someone with you for support