

# Breast Cancer Screening and Breast Implants

*You will be asked to sign an additional consent form before having your breast screen. The information provided below may answer some of your questions about breast implants and having a breast screen.*

## Is breast cancer screening effective for women with implants?

Special techniques are required to take a high quality breast screen when breast implants are present. BreastScreen Queensland radiographers are specially trained in these techniques. Your images will be checked before you leave the Service to make sure that as much breast tissue as possible can be seen. Sometimes repeat images are needed because the implant has moved or more information is required.

Breast cancer screening can find most breast cancers present at the time but, like many medical tests, it is not 100 per cent effective. You should note that your implants will obscure some of your breast tissue, making it more difficult to find small breast cancers.

## Is it safe for me to have regular breast screens?

Having a breast screen is considered to be safe for women with implants. While damage to an implant during breast cancer screening is rare, there are some risks that you should be aware of:

- There is an extremely small chance that the pressure placed on the implant by the mammography machine could cause the implant to rupture or break. If your implant has already ruptured or started to leak, it is possible that having a breast screen could increase the amount of silicone or saline (depending on the type of implant) spreading into the breast tissue.

- Sometimes very small amounts of silicone pass through the pores of the implant shell, often called ‘bleeding’ of implants. At present it is not known whether mammography increases ‘bleeding’ of implants.
- Some women develop unusually hard breasts because the scar tissue surrounding the implant tightens. There is a small chance that having a breast screen could cause the scar tissue to crack. This is not harmful in itself. However, your breasts may have a different shape and softer texture afterwards, and both breasts may be affected differently.

## Will having a breast screen be painful?

You may experience some discomfort as the implant usually needs to be moved aside to expose the maximum amount of breast tissue. Most women find that this discomfort does not last long. Tell the radiographer if you feel it is too uncomfortable. Please note that you can withdraw your consent and request that the breast screen be stopped at any time.



## Will I be told if any problems with my breast implants are found?

No. Identifying and reporting implant problems is not the role of BreastScreen Queensland services.

Screening mammography is for the purpose of detecting breast cancer and will not include commentary on the status of your implants.

## Do my breast implants make me more likely to develop breast cancer?

There is currently no evidence that women with implants are more likely to develop breast cancer.

## How often should I have a breast screen?

You should discuss this with your doctor. BreastScreen Queensland screens eligible women every two years.

## If I notice a possible problem with my breast implants, can I return to a BreastScreen Queensland Service to have it checked?

No. BreastScreen Queensland was established to detect early signs of breast cancer, not to check for breast implant problems. If you are concerned about your implants you should see your doctor or breast specialist as soon as possible.

## What else should I do?

It is recommended that you have regular breast examinations by your doctor or breast specialist. If you find a lump or notice any changes that concern you, contact your doctor without delay. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask the BreastScreen Queensland staff or your doctor.

## What if I need more information?

Specially trained nurse counsellors will be available to provide information and support during your visit. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask the staff at the BreastScreen Queensland Service or phone **13 20 50**. We aim to provide you with high quality and friendly care at your visit.

**BreastScreen Queensland:**  
*quality and care women want.*

[www.breastscreen.qld.gov.au](http://www.breastscreen.qld.gov.au)