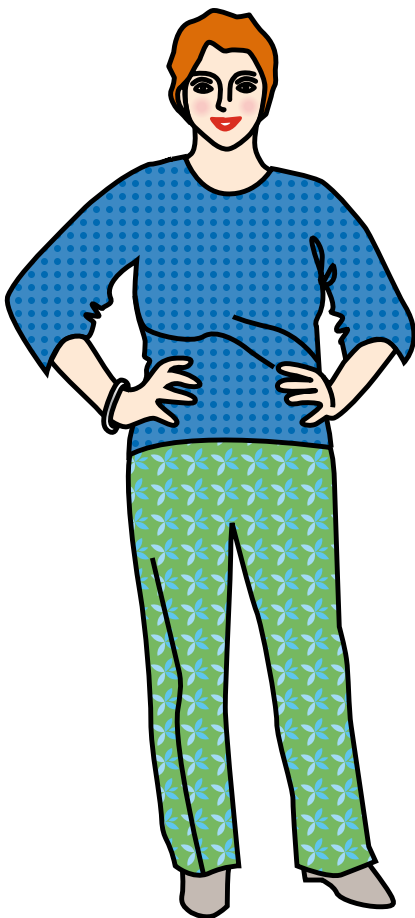


# A Guide to Breast Screening





# Contents

## Information for Carers, Family, Friends and Medical Guardians of Care

Introduction

Information on BreastCheck

Information on Attending Screening

## The Screening Story

Your Health

Your Invitation From BreastCheck

Your Screening

Getting Your Results

# Introduction

BreastCheck is a free health service, funded by the Department of Health and Children, which aims to reduce deaths from breast cancer by finding and treating the disease at an early stage.

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers among women in Ireland. About 1 in 12 women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. It is more common in women aged 50 and over.

Women with learning disabilities should have access to breast screening on the same basis as other women. The purpose of this guide is to help encourage their participation as much as possible.

This section *Information for Carers, Family, Friends and Medical Guardians of Care* is for those who care for women and includes necessary information on BreastCheck and what participation in screening requires.

The next section *The Screening Story* is for women themselves - and aims to help them understand screening as much as possible.

# Information on BreastCheck

## **What is Breast Screening?**

Breast screening means taking an x-ray of the breasts, (known as a mammogram) to look for breast cancer. Going for regular screening means that any unhealthy changes will be found as early as possible. At this stage, breast cancer is easier to treat and a woman has a high chance of a good recovery.

## **What is BreastCheck?**

BreastCheck is a free health service which offers breast screening to women aged 50-64 every two years. It is fully funded by the Government.

## **How Does BreastCheck Know Who is Eligible for Screening?**

BreastCheck has a list of women eligible for screening from information supplied by Government services and health insurance companies. However, women in long-term residential care may be less likely than other women in the population to be on any of these lists. Therefore, it is important to check if there are any other women at the care home, eligible for screening, who have not been invited by BreastCheck. These women can easily be registered for screening by phoning us at 1800 45 45 55.

## **What Happens at a Breast Screening Appointment?**

The appointment takes approximately half an hour, though it may take longer for a woman with learning difficulties. Each woman has to undress from the waist up (cubicles are provided for privacy). Each breast is placed between two plates and pressure is applied to get the best possible x-ray image. It may feel slightly uncomfortable - like getting a blood pressure check.

## **When Will She Know her Result?**

We will post the results within three weeks.

**What if She is Called Back?**

Please don't worry. Approximately 1 in 20 women who receive a BreastCheck mammogram are called back for further tests. The vast majority of these women are given normal results following the extra tests.

**How Often Will a Woman be Screened by BreastCheck?**

Each woman is invited back for screening approximately every two years until she reaches 65. Breast cancer can develop at any time. Therefore, even after being screened, each woman should herself be breast aware / or be checked regularly by her Doctor.

For more information on breast health, to speak to a specialist nurse, or for a free breast awareness pack call Action Breast Cancer on Freephone 1800 30 90 40.

# Information on Attending Screening

Carers, family, friends and medical guardians of care are people trusted by women with learning difficulties to help them make the right decisions about breast screening.

Before informing the woman about screening we recommend that you consider if the woman is suitable for screening or not. Below are some criteria to help with making this decision.

To attend for screening the woman will need to:

- Travel to the clinical screening unit
- Have enough mobility to get into position for the mammogram
- Have sufficient bodily control to stay still for the x-ray.

## **If the Woman is Suitable for Screening**

If the woman is suitable for screening, then the pictures and text in *The Screening Story* are designed to help her understand screening. It is recommended that a health professional or loved one work through the guide with her.

Before her mammogram each woman is normally required to give written consent to take part.

If the woman cannot provide her own written consent we need a letter from the woman's Doctor (this can be her GP or Clinical Director of the residential home) which provides consent on her behalf.

## *Special needs*

It is important to write to BreastCheck and let us know, in advance, if the woman has special needs.

Is she?

- Mobility impaired
- Wheelchair bound
- Deaf
- Blind

Please state any other special needs. This will enable us to have the screening facilities prepared for the woman.

### *Appointments*

BreastCheck can either screen women from a residential home one at a time, or in small groups up to a maximum of five. Please advise us which is the best.

### **If the woman is Unsuitable for Screening**

If the experience is likely to be too traumatic for the woman, either mentally or physically, it is not recommended that she come for screening. If she is not suitable then best practice is to 'deconsent' her from the programme.

This helps to keep our records as accurate as possible and avoid unnecessary further correspondence.

A woman can only be deconsented by the registered Doctor / Medical Guardian in charge of her care, who must write to BreastCheck stating a wish to deconsent her. The woman can be re-included in BreastCheck at any stage by her Doctor writing to us again.

### **Contact Details**

BreastCheck  
The National Breast Screening Programme  
89-94 Capel Street  
Dublin 1.

Freephone: 1800 45 45 55  
Email: [info@breastcheck.ie](mailto:info@breastcheck.ie)  
[www.breastcheck.ie](http://www.breastcheck.ie)



# The Screening Story

## Your Health



## Your Health

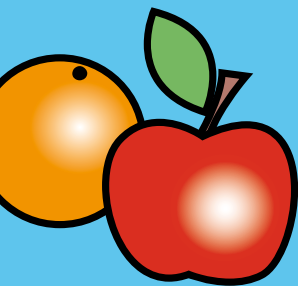
**We all want to be healthy,  
no one wants to be sick.**

**Q.** What does 'healthy' mean?

**A.** To be healthy means to have all parts of our body working well.

**Q.** Can you think of some different parts of the body?

**A.** Arms, legs, eyes, ears, heart, lungs, tummy, breasts....

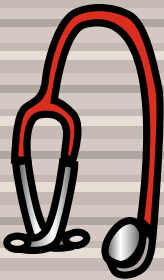


# Your Health

**It is very important for each of us to look after our health.**

**Q.** How can you look after your health?

- A.**
1. Eat healthy food
  2. Sleep well
  3. Take exercise
  4. Check our bodies



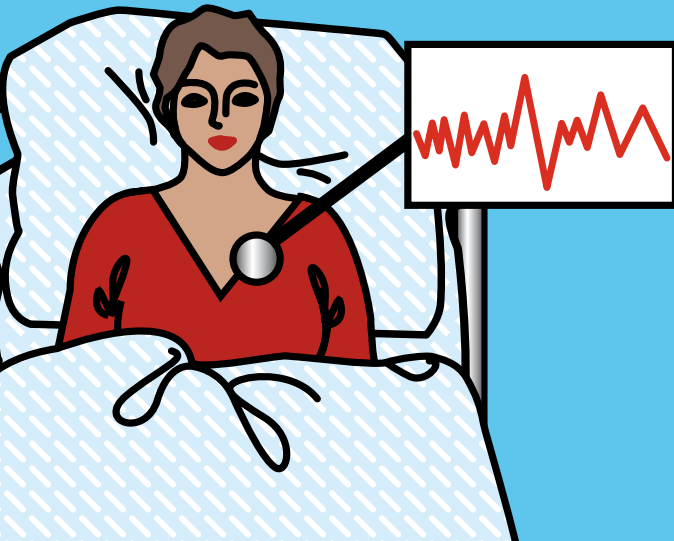
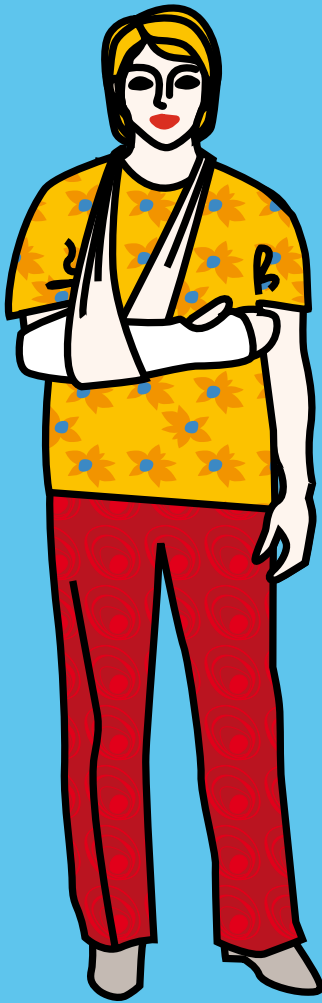
## Your Health

**If ever you feel a pain or soreness you should tell someone.**

It is important to look at your body when you are having a bath or shower to check that it is healthy. If you see anything unusual e.g. a rash, a mark or a lump make sure to tell somebody.

**Q.** Who would you tell?

**A.** You could tell a parent or house parent, someone in your family or a doctor.





## Your Health

**There are many types of sickness that make people feel unwell.**

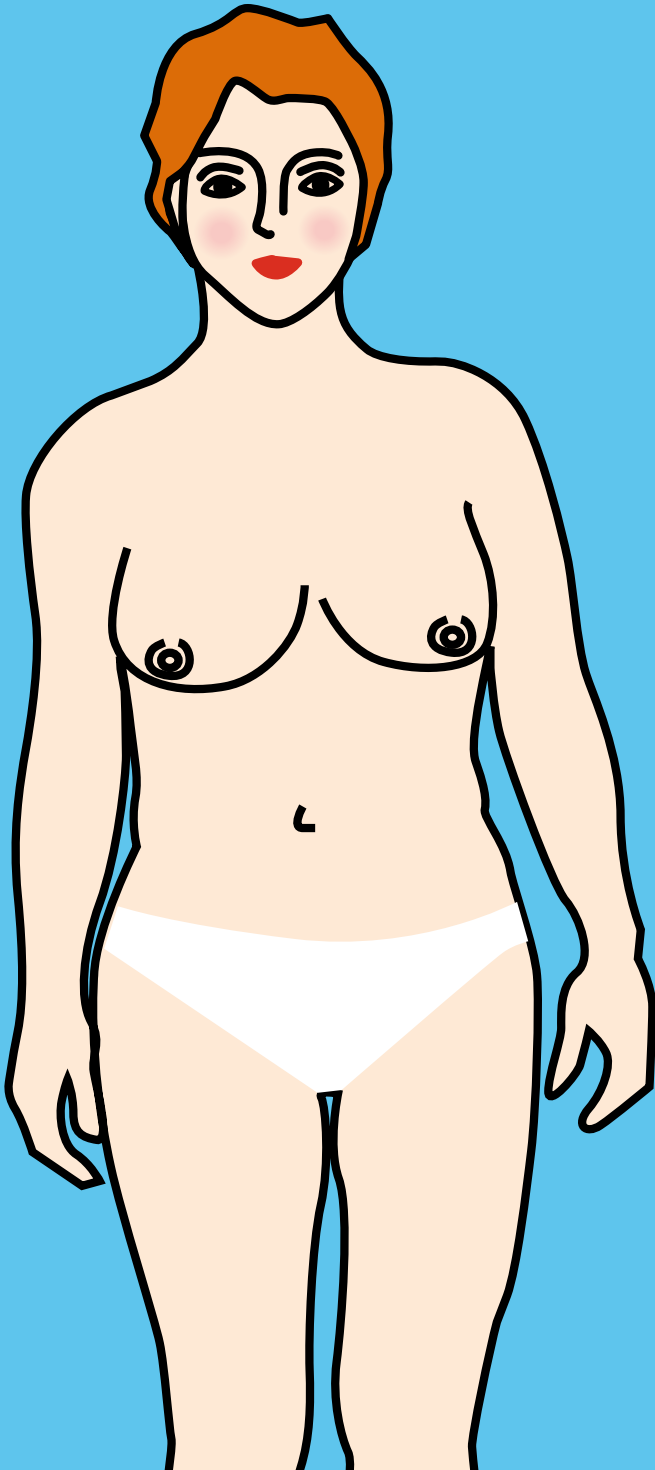
**Q.** Can you think of any?

**A.** Cold, 'flu, broken leg, heart attack, cancer.....

**You may know someone who has had cancer.**

**Q.** What is cancer?

**A.** Cancer is a disease which people can get in different parts of the body. It stops that part of the body working properly and it can be painful.



## Your Health

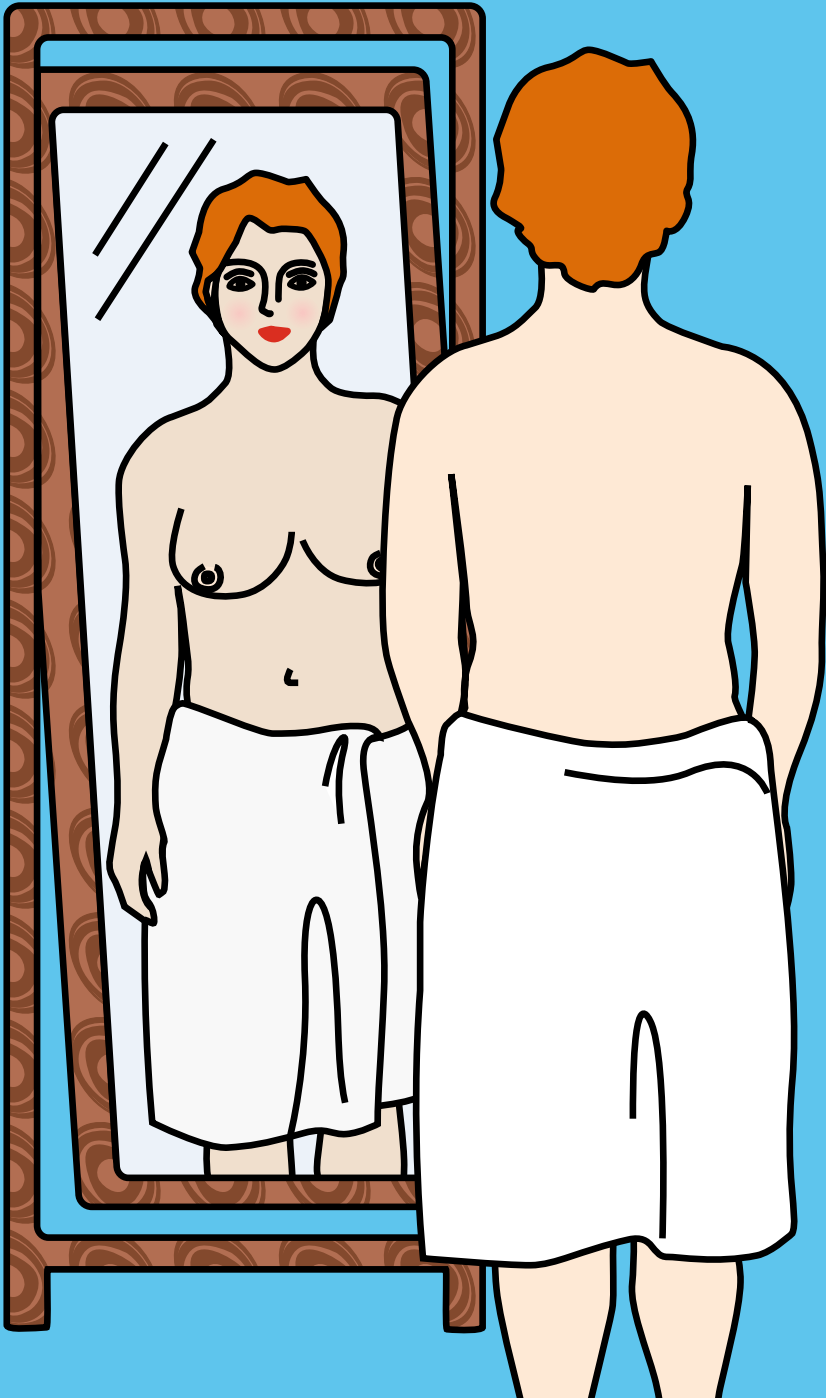
**When a woman is between 50 and 64 years old a part of her body that can get cancer is her breasts.**

This only happens to about one in every hundred women.

**Cancer of the breast can be treated by the doctor. The treatment is very successful if the cancer is found quickly before the woman becomes very sick.**

**Q.** How can cancer be found quickly?

**A.** 'BreastCheck' can help.



# Your Health

## **What you should do to look after your breasts.**

To keep your breasts healthy, you should do the following things

### **1. Look out for any changes in your breasts**

One important thing you should do is look at your breasts regularly. If you know what your breasts look like, it will be much easier to notice any changes. A handy time to look at your breasts in the mirror is when you have finished drying yourself after a bath or a shower. The sort of changes you should look out for are:

1. Any dimple or pull of the skin.
2. Any redness of the skin.
3. Any changes in the nipple. It may look flattened or pulled in.
4. Any change in the shape or size of your breasts.
5. Any noticeable difference between one breast and the other.

# Your Health

6. A swelling or lump in any part of your breast or under your arm.
7. Any pain or soreness in your breast or under your arm.

## **2. Look after your general health**

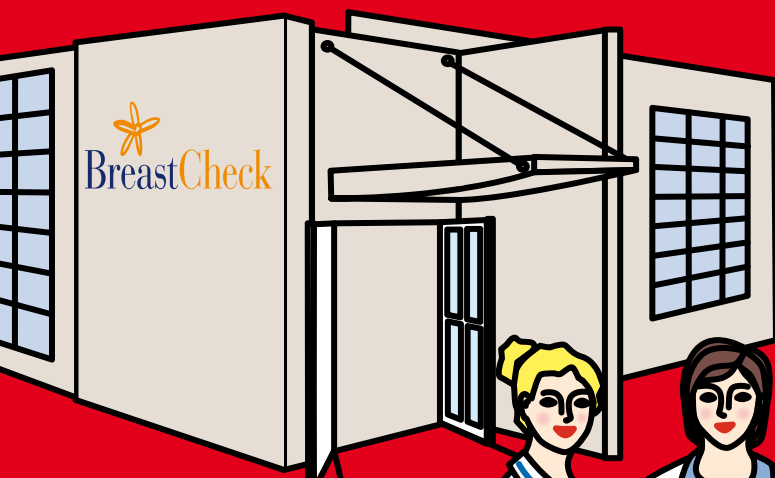
Look after your general health by:

1. Eating healthy food.
2. Taking regular exercise.
3. Watch your weight.
4. Do not drink too much alcohol.

- 3. Go for your BreastCheck Appointment every two years, when you receive your letter, until you are 65 years old.**

# The Screening Story

## Your Invitation From BreastCheck





## Your Invitation From BreastCheck

**A special group called 'BreastCheck' was set up. They have special clinics where they check women's breasts to make sure they are healthy. They are trained to look out for any sign of cancer. If they find signs of cancer at an early stage it can be treated very successfully.**

**Q. How does 'BreastCheck' do that?**

**A. 'BreastCheck' goes through the following steps...**

**They get a list of all the women in Ireland between 50 and 64 years of age.**

**Q. Are you in this age group?**



 BreastCheck

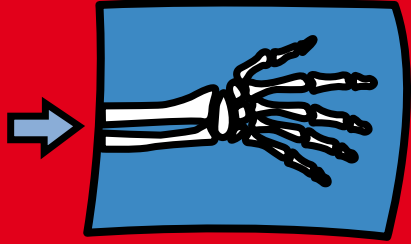
Dear

Ms Trudy O'Leary  
12 Swallow Lodge  
Ballyboyne  
Co. Carlow

## Your Invitation From BreastCheck

**They write a letter to all those women asking them to come for a breast check to make sure that they are healthy.**

**Q. Did you ever get a letter?**

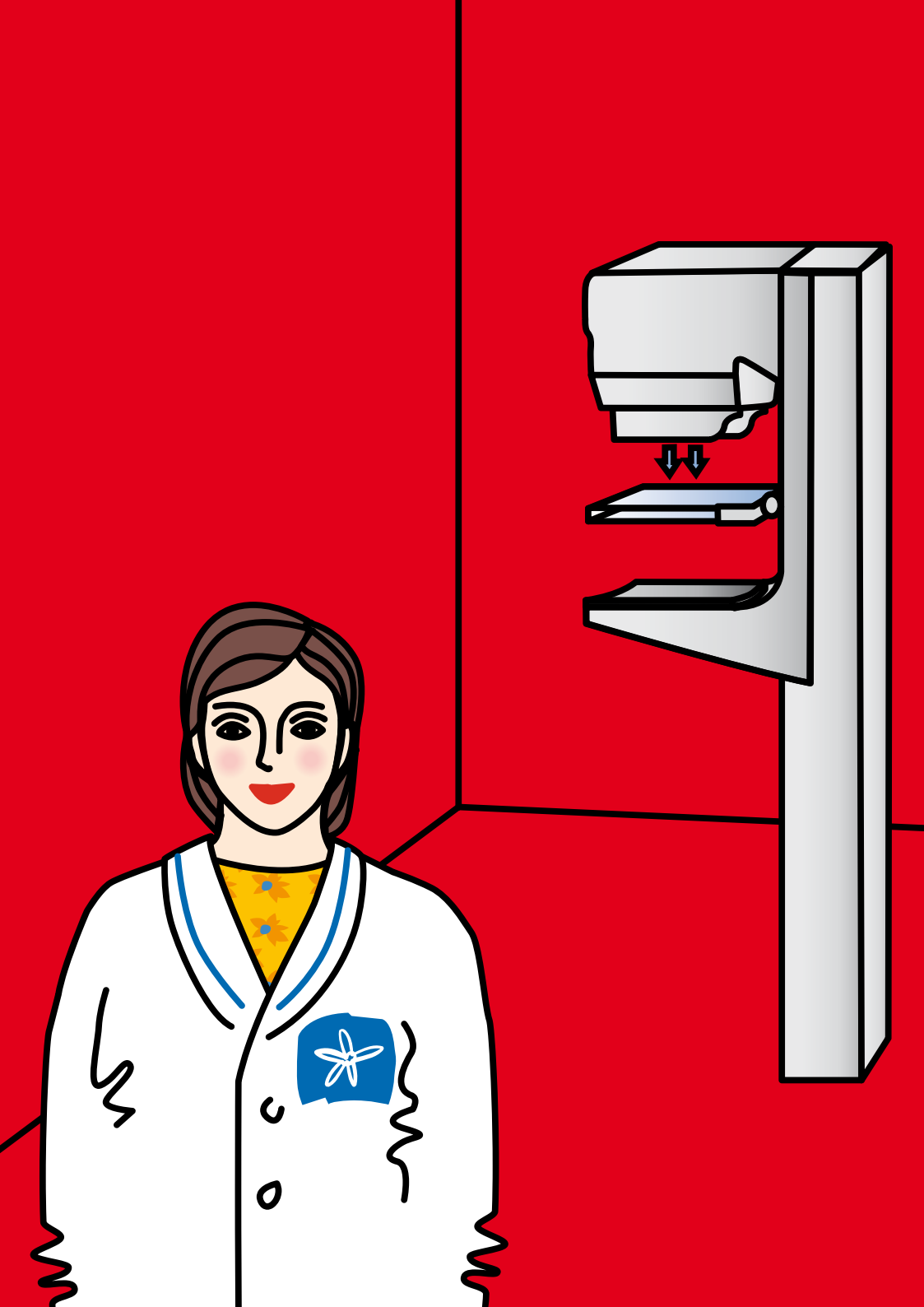


## Your Invitation From BreastCheck

**The breast check is an x-ray of your breasts to make sure you have no cancer.**

**Q.** What is an x-ray?

**A.** An x-ray is a special type of photograph which shows the inside of your body e.g. an x-ray of your arm will show the bone inside.



## Your Invitation From BreastCheck

**An x-ray of the breast is called a mammogram. It shows the inside of the breast.**

**Q. Who takes the x-ray?**

**A. A person called a radiographer takes the x-ray photograph. She is specially trained.**





## Your Invitation From BreastCheck

**When you get this letter from BreastCheck it is very important that you go for the check up.**

**Q. Why is this important?**

**A. So that you can make sure you are healthy.**



## Your Invitation From BreastCheck

**If you are going to have the BreastCheck x-ray you do not have to reply to the letter.**

**You will get an appointment shortly.  
You can call BreastCheck if you have any questions.**



January February

m	7	14	21	m	7	14	21	
t	1	8	15	t	1	8	15	22
w	2	9	16	w	2	9	16	23
t	3	10	17	t	3	10	17	24
f	4	11	18	f	4	11	18	25
s	5	12	19	s	5	12	19	26
s	6	13	20	s	6	13	20	27

# Your Invitation From BreastCheck

**Soon you will receive a second letter telling you the date and time of your BreastCheck appointment and exactly where to go for it.**

**You should:**

- (1)** check to see if you are free on that day.
- (2)** think about how you will get to the BreastCheck clinic – can you get there yourself? Will you need someone to bring you?



## Your Invitation From BreastCheck

**If you need a carer or friend to go along with you, think about who you would like to ask. Perhaps a member of your family, a friend or a carer where you live or work, someone who you feel comfortable with.**

**Q. Who would you like to go along with you?**





## Your Invitation From BreastCheck

**Talk to that person, show them the time and date on the BreastCheck letter.**

**Make sure that your carer/friend is free on that day and that they know how to get to the clinic.**

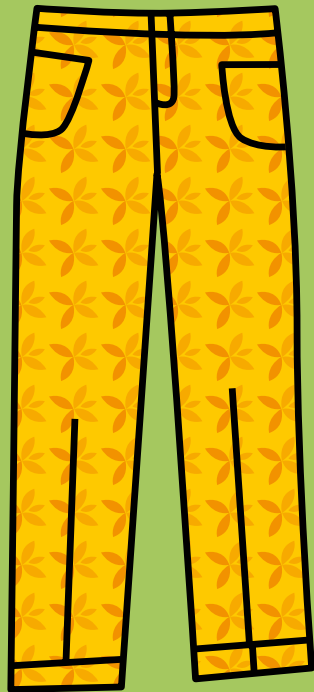
**If the day does not suit you or your carer/friend, just ring the BreastCheck Clinic and they will give you a new appointment.**

**(The phone number is at the top of the letter.)**



# The Screening Story

## Your Screening



## Your Screening

**On the day of your BreastCheck appointment you should wear trousers or a skirt and a top (not a dress).**

**Pick a top which is easy to take off and put on as you will need to do this in the clinic.**



## Your Screening

**It is a good idea to have a shower that morning so that you feel nice and fresh.**



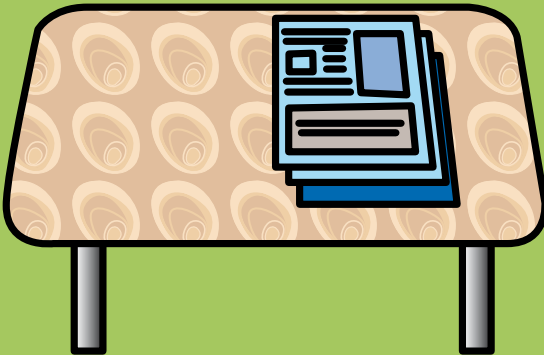


## Your Screening

**When you arrive at the clinic, your carer/  
friend can go in with you.**

**One of the BreastCheck staff will meet you.  
She will make sure that they have your  
correct name, address and age.**

CHANGING ROOM



## Your Screening

**You will then be asked to wait in the waiting room with your friend or carer.**

**You might be asked to go straight into the screening room or you might be asked to go into a changing room.**

CHANGING ROOM



## Your Screening

**When it is your turn for the x-ray it is likely that you will be asked to go into a changing room. It is like the changing room in a clothes shop.**

CHANGING ROOM



## Your Screening

**In the changing room you should take off your top, then take off your bra and put your top back on.**

**Q. Where will you put your bra?**

**A. Make sure you have a bag with you that you can put your bra into.**

**Then go back into the waiting room until you are called for your breast x-ray (mammogram).**

← X-RAY ROOM





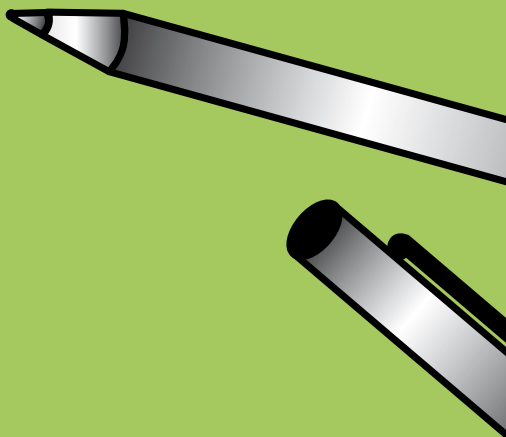
## Your Screening

**You stay in the waiting room until you are called for your breast x-ray (mammogram). Your friend/carer will not be allowed into the x-ray room with you but the BreastCheck staff will be there to help you.**

 BreastCheck

I agree

Signed



## Your Screening

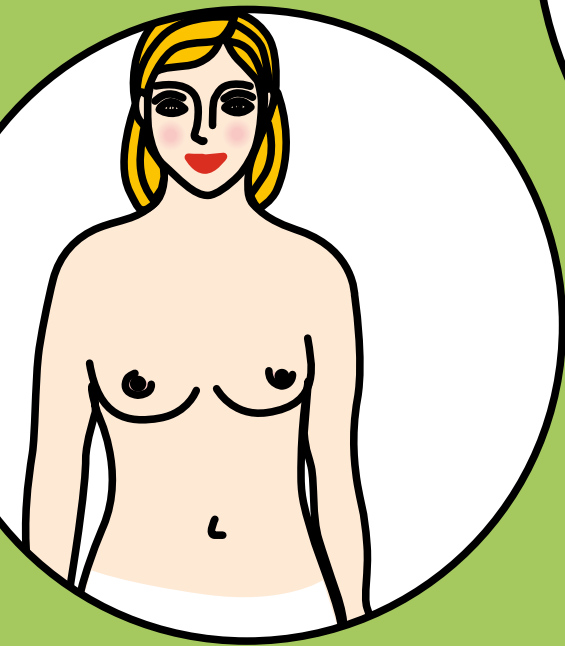
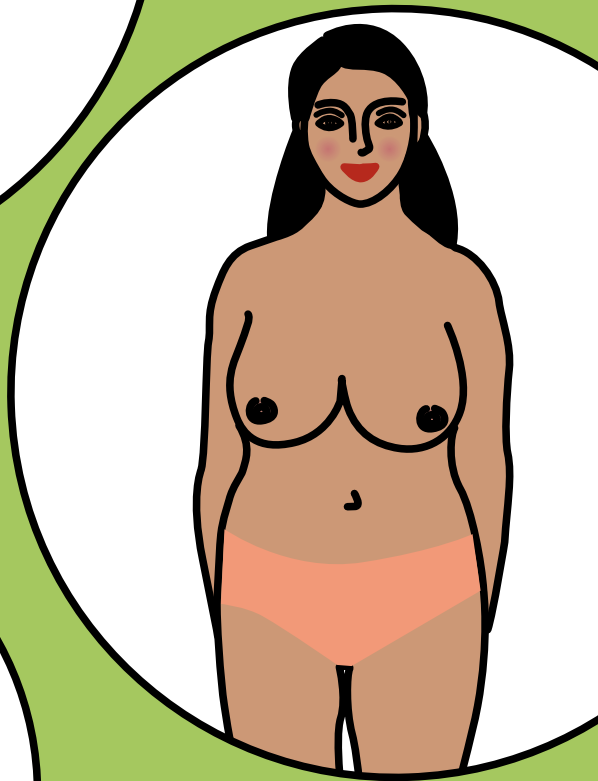
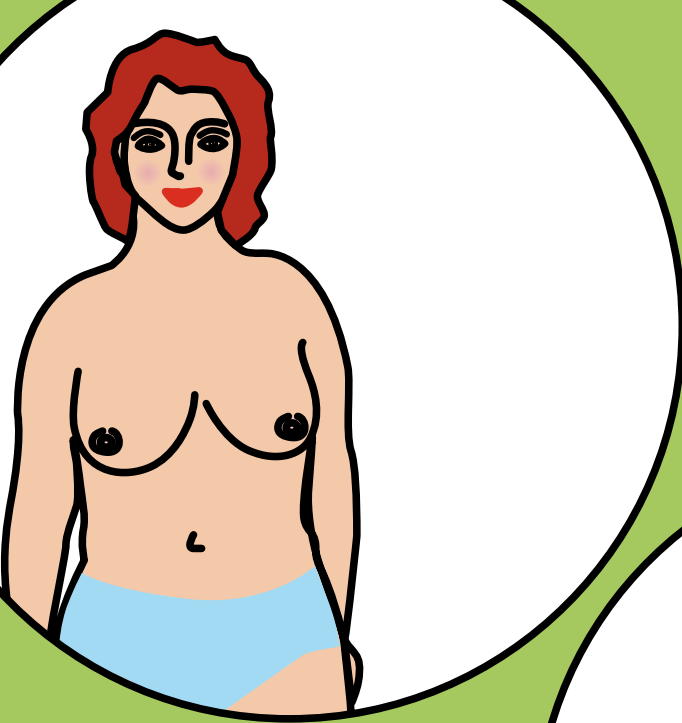
**When you are called in for your x-ray you will be asked to sign a form to show that you agree to have the x-ray.**

**Q. Are you able to sign your name or will you need help?**



## Your Screening

**The person who takes the x-ray (the radiographer) will show you the x-ray machine. She will need to take two pictures of each breast.**

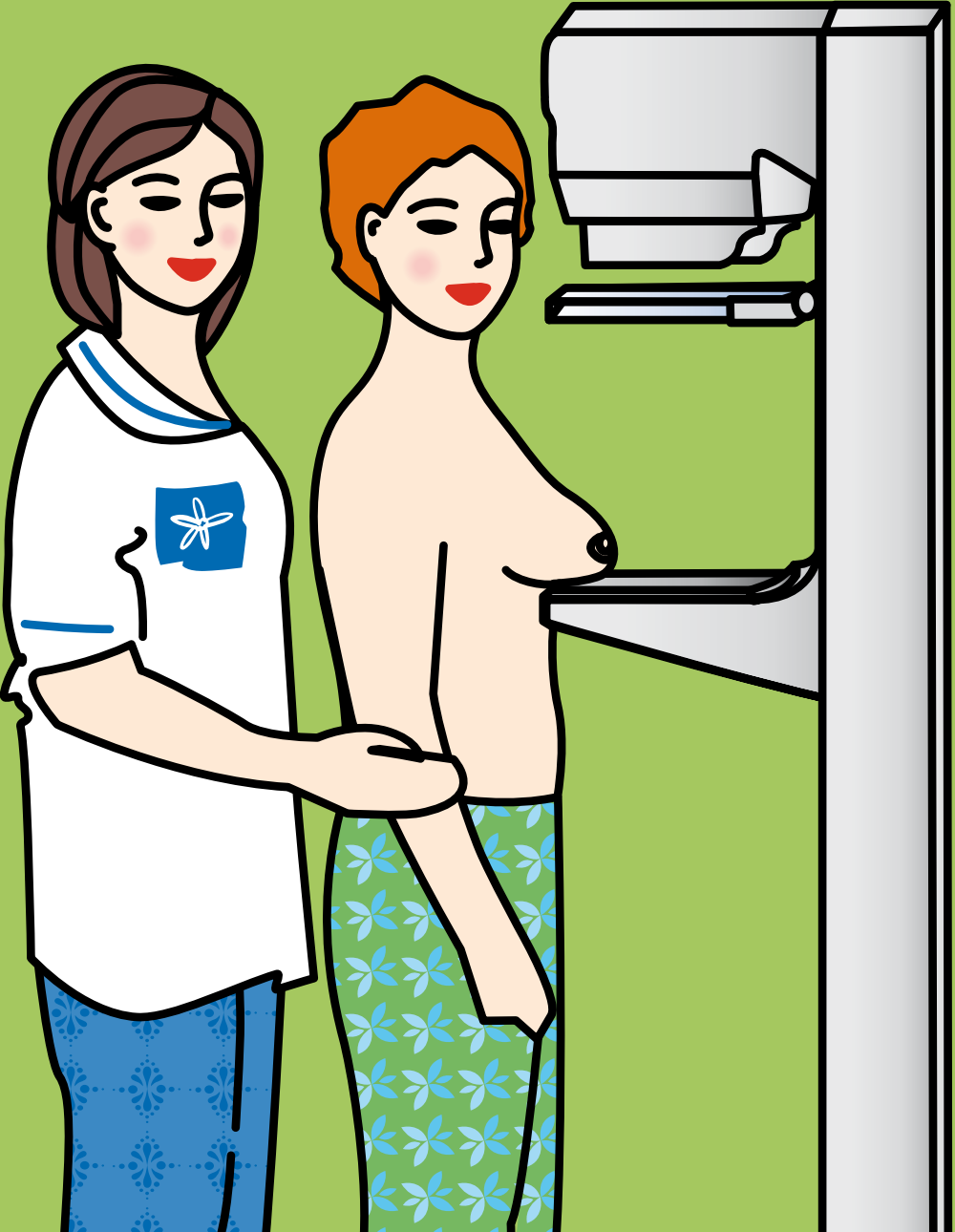


## Your Screening

**You will then take off your top again. You may feel a bit shy or embarrassed but don't worry. Remember the radiographer is seeing lots of women for breast x-rays every day. She will help you to feel relaxed.**

**Q. Are all women's bodies the same shape and size?**

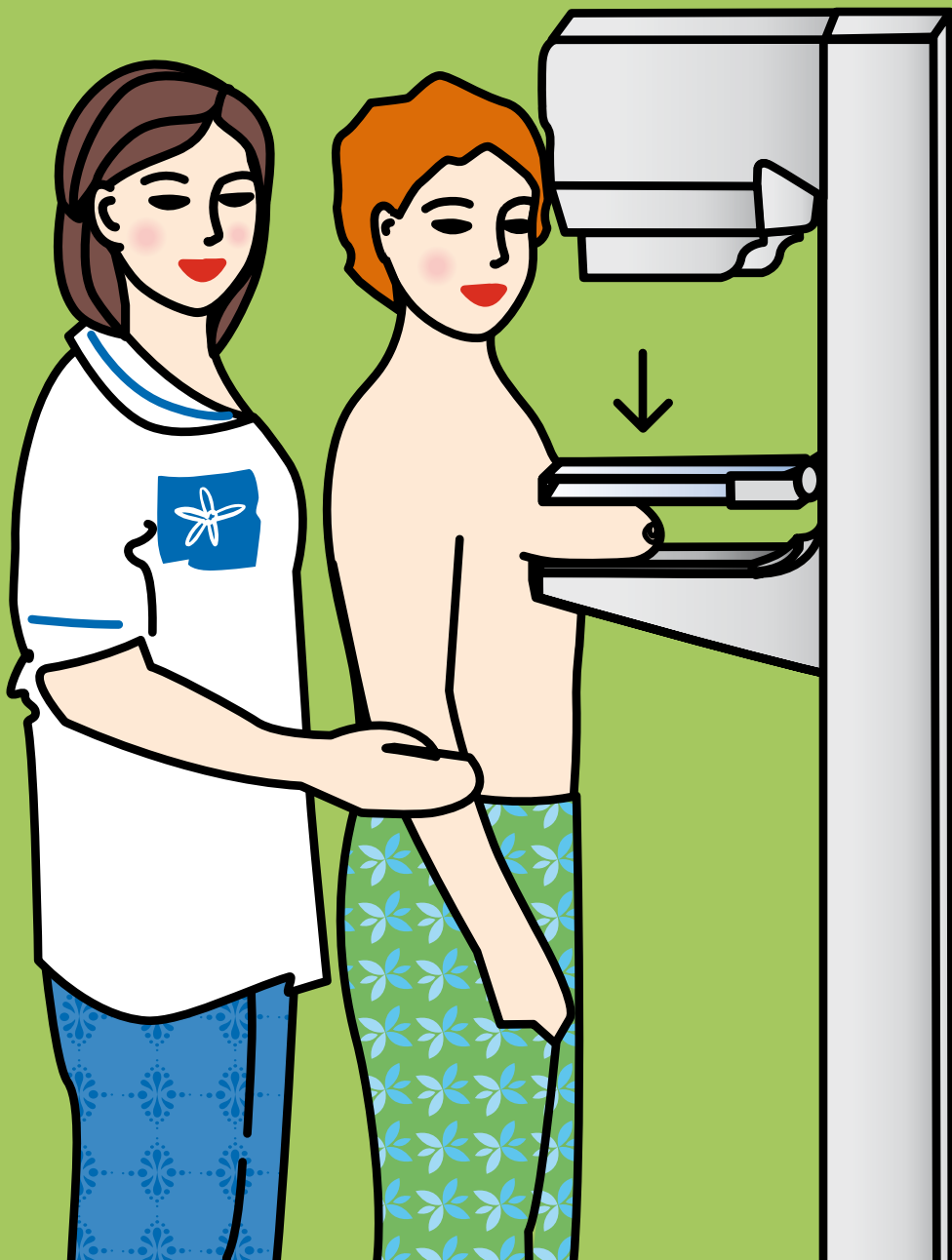
**A. No, women's bodies are different shapes and sizes, small and tall, fat and thin. Women's breasts are also different. Some women have bigger breasts and others much smaller. It doesn't matter what shape or size your breasts are, you can still have the BreastCheck x-ray.**





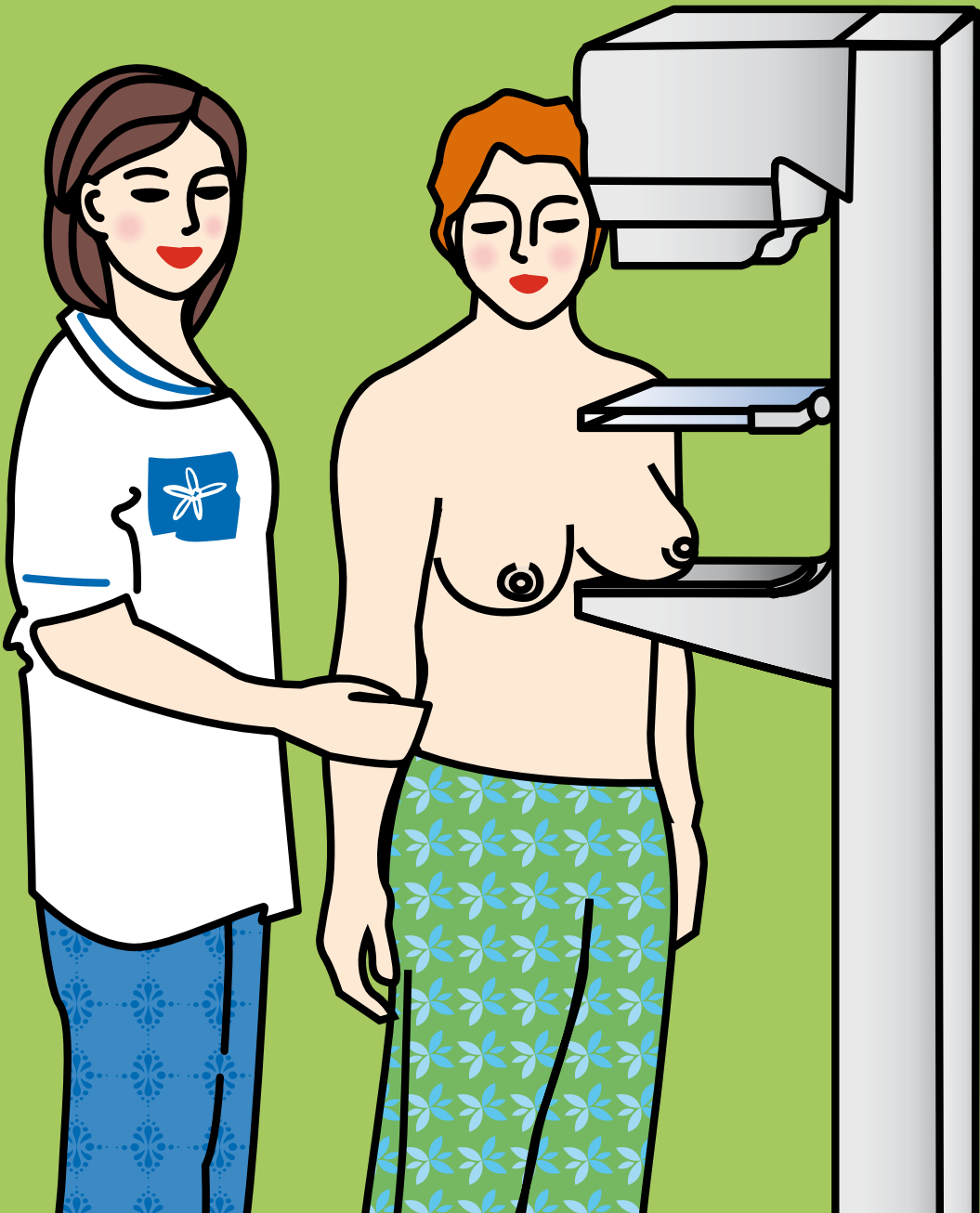
## Your Screening

**You will be asked to stand beside the x-ray machine and the radiographer will show you a little 'shelf' where you place your breast.**



## Your Screening

**An x-ray plate will be placed on top of your breast to take the picture. This may feel cold or a little uncomfortable but it should not hurt. The radiographer will take two pictures of each breast, you have to try to stay very still so that the pictures will be very clear.**



## Your Screening

**Next you place your other breast on the little shelf and the radiographer will take two pictures of that breast. Remember to stay as still as you can, it only takes a couple of minutes.**



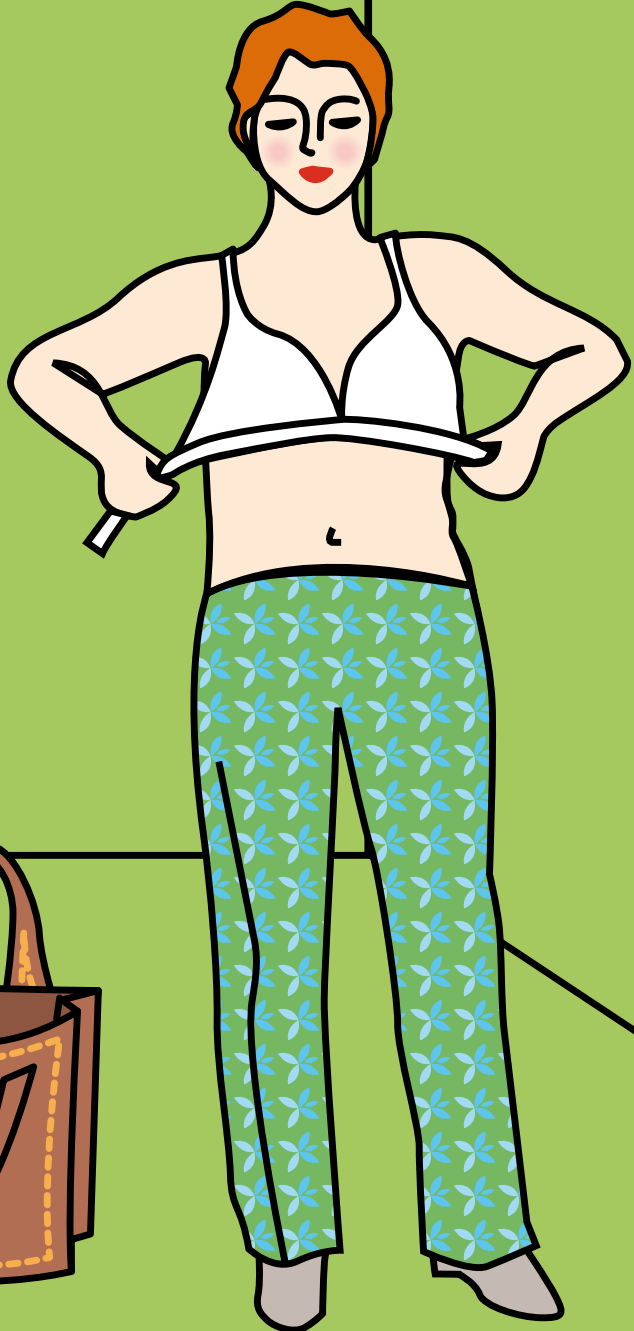
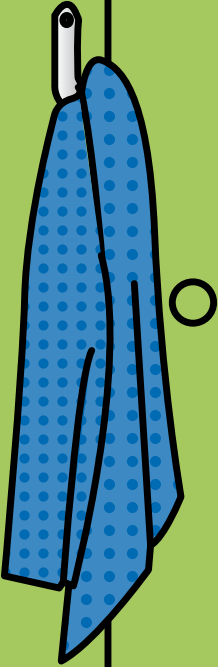
**WAITING ROOM →**

## Your Screening

**When the four x-rays have been taken you put your top on again. You don't put your bra on just yet in case any more x rays are needed. Then you go back out to the waiting room.**

**The radiographer has to make sure that the x-ray pictures were taken properly. She will come out and tell you if they are ok.**

CHANGING ROOM





## Your Screening

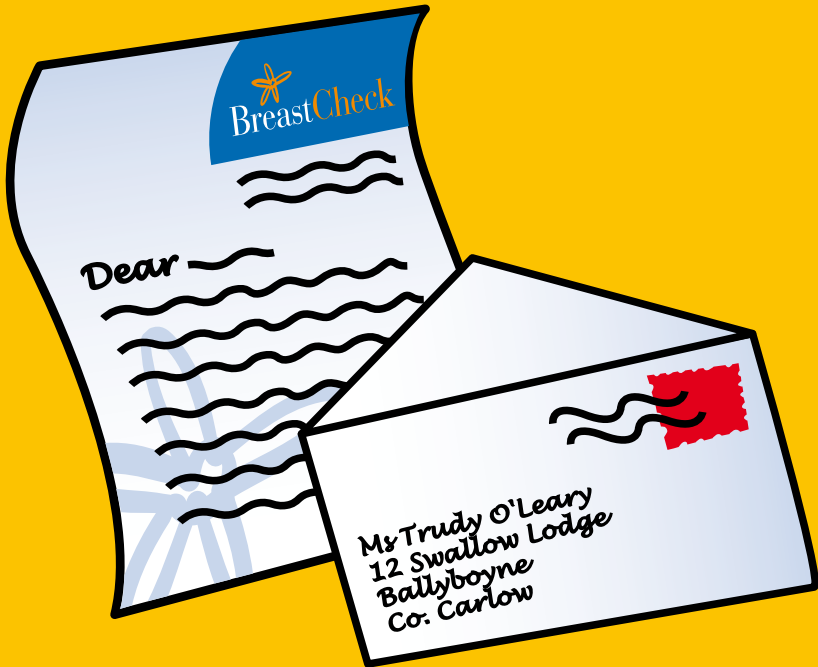
**If the pictures did not turn out clearly she may need you to go in and do one again. If she is happy with the pictures, she will ask you to go back into the changing room where you can put your bra on again. When you are ready you go back to your friend or carer in the waiting room.**

**You are then finished and ready to go home. You will not be told the result of the check up on that day as they have to look very carefully at the x-rays.**



# The Screening Story

## Getting Your Results



BreastCheck

Dear \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
  
Ms Trudy O'Leary  
12 Swallow Lodge  
Ballyboyne  
Co. Carlow

## Getting Your Results

**A couple of weeks after the 'BreastCheck' x-ray you will get a letter to give you the result. Most women are told that they are perfectly healthy.**



## Do You Need More Tests?

**If you need more tests you will receive a letter about it. Only one in every 100 women is found to have cancer.**





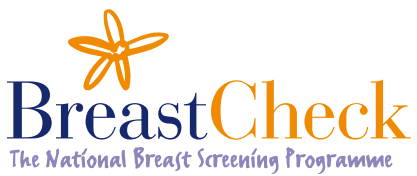
## Do You Need More Tests?

**If cancer is found, BreastCheck will organise treatment straight away. Cancer in the breast can be treated very successfully. The earlier the cancer is found the easier it will be to treat. That is why the BreastCheck test is so important.**

**Have you any questions about BreastCheck?**







Freephone Information  
**1800 45 45 55**

BreastCheck is a government sponsored programme