

Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) Frequently Asked Questions

Updated: July 2014

1. When should women get screened for breast cancer?

- The Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) recommends that women aged 50 to 74 years who are at average risk for breast cancer have a screening mammogram every two years. Women aged 30 to 69 years who have been identified as being at high risk for breast cancer should have a screening mammogram and breast magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) every year.
- Go to www.ontario.ca/screenforlife and use the **Time to Screen Tool** to find out when it's the right time to start screening for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer.

2. Who is eligible for screening through the OBSP?

The OBSP screens two groups of women:

- a. Ontario residents at **average risk** for breast cancer who are 50 to 74* years of age and have:

- no acute breast symptoms
- no personal history of breast cancer
- no current breast implants
- not had a mammogram within the last 11 months

* Women over age 74 can be screened within the OBSP; however, they are encouraged to make a personal decision about breast cancer screening in consultation with their healthcare provider.

- b. Ontario residents at **high risk** for breast cancer aged 30 to 69 years who have a referral from their physician, have no acute breast symptoms and fall into one of the following risk categories:

- They have a genetic mutation that puts them at high risk for breast cancer.
- They have a parent, sibling or child who has a genetic mutation that puts them at high risk for breast cancer and have declined genetic testing.
- They have a family history that indicates a lifetime risk of breast cancer that is greater or equal to 25 percent confirmed through genetic assessment.
- They received radiation therapy to the chest before 30 years of age and at least eight years ago as treatment for another cancer or condition (e.g. Hodgkin's disease).

3. How can women arrange for screening through the OBSP?

- Women aged 50 to 74 years can book their own appointments or be referred by a family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Women aged 30 to 69 years who think they may be at **high risk** for breast cancer need a referral from a physician, based on their family or medical history.
- Women who have already been screened at an OBSP site are reminded by letter when they are due for their next screening appointment, with the exception of women over 74. No additional referral is needed.
- Women can find the nearest OBSP site by calling 1.800.668.9304 or visiting www.cancercare.on.ca/breastscreening.

4. Should women in their 40s who are at average risk for breast cancer be screened?

- The OBSP does not routinely screen women aged 40 to 49 years with mammography.
- The evidence for regular screening mammography for women aged 40 to 49 years at average risk for breast cancer is not as strong as for women aged 50 to 74 years. The number of deaths from breast cancer prevented through screening is also greater for women aged 50 to 74 years than for women in their 40s.
- Women in their 40s are encouraged to make a personal decision about breast cancer screening in consultation with their family doctor or nurse practitioner.

5. At what age should breast cancer screening be stopped?

- The OBSP recommends that **women at average risk** for breast cancer aged 50 to 74 years be screened every two years for breast cancer. Women over age 74 are encouraged to make a personal decision about breast cancer screening in consultation with their family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- The OBSP recommends that **women aged 30 to 69 years identified as being at high risk** for breast cancer get screened every year for breast cancer with mammography and breast MRI. Between the ages of 70 and 74 years, the OBSP recommends that women at high risk for breast cancer be screened with mammography only. Women over age 74 are encouraged to make a personal decision about breast cancer screening in consultation with their family doctor or nurse practitioner.

6. How many women at average risk get screened through the OBSP?

- In 2010–2011, approximately 1,103,000 (61 percent) Ontario women 50 to 74 years old were screened for breast cancer with a mammogram out of the 1,813,000 who were eligible for screening.
- Of the 1,103,000 Ontario women aged 50 to 74 who are screened for breast cancer via mammography every two years, 785,000 women (71 percent) are screened within the OBSP.
- Women are encouraged to get screened through the OBSP because organized screening offers important benefits, such as:
 - inviting women to participate in screening
 - reminding participants when it is time for their next screening test
 - notifying participants of screening results
 - tracking participants throughout screening processes
 - evaluating program quality and performance

7. How can I reduce my risk of breast cancer?

- A healthy lifestyle can reduce your risk of breast cancer:
 - Avoid alcohol or have no more than one alcoholic drink per day.
 - Limit your time on hormone replacement therapy, if used. Talk with your family doctor or nurse practitioner before making any changes to your medication.
 - Maintain a healthy body weight, especially after menopause.
 - Be physically active as part of everyday life.
 - Most importantly, get screened. Regular mammograms, generally every two years, are the best way most women aged 50 to 74 years can protect themselves from dying of breast cancer.