

## Having a Mammogram

You have been referred by your doctor to have a mammogram. This leaflet explains what will happen during your mammogram, how to prepare, and any associated risks.

### What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is a specialist x-ray of the breasts.

It uses a small amount of ionising radiation to produce detailed images that help doctors detect changes in breast tissue, even before they can be noticed. The amount of radiation used is kept as low as possible while still producing images that are useful for diagnosis.

### Is there any preparation?

Please don't use spray deodorant or any other products on the breast or underarm on the day of the mammogram, as this may affect the quality of the x-ray.

You should wear a top and bottom instead of a dress for easier undressing.

It is important that you tell us if you have mobility difficulties.

### What happens when I come for the scan?

Upon your arrival in the department, you will meet our reception staff. You will then be met by a radiographer (a healthcare professional trained in mammography) who will fully explain the procedure and will carry out your examination. You will be asked to undress down to the waist. The radiographer will position your breasts on the specially designed mammography machine. To obtain clear pictures the breast must be gently compressed between two plates for a few seconds.

### Will it hurt?

Some people find mammography uncomfortable, and a few find it painful because of the compression needed to ensure good images are obtained. Any discomfort should not last long. You can talk to the mammographer, who is trained to help you feel more comfortable and give you support. You can also ask to stop at any time.

### What are the risks?

#### Radiation

We will expose you to ionising radiation during this examination. We are all exposed to ionising radiation every day from natural sources such as cosmic rays, soil, rocks, and even food.



Ionising radiation can cause cell damage which, after many years, may very rarely turn cancerous. The estimated risk from a mammogram is less than 0.01%, which is very small. The benefits of early detection far outweigh this risk.

Before your mammogram, we ensure that:

- The benefits of your examination outweigh the risks.
- The radiation dose is kept as low as reasonably achievable.
- The amount of radiation we use is tailored to you.
- Equipment is regularly tested and maintained to ensure safety and optimal performance.

### **What happens after the mammogram?**

You will be able to dress as soon as the examination is complete. Your images will be reviewed by a specialist who interprets medical images. The radiographer will tell you how you will receive the results of your mammogram.

### **Where can I get further information?**

The staff in the Radiology department will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Please ask at the time of your appointment or telephone the department at any time.

**Sutton:** 0208 661 3588/89

**Chelsea:** 020 7811 8366

**Cavendish Square:** 020 7811 8941

If you feel unwell or have concerns about your health, please contact:

**The Royal Marsden Hotline** 020 8915 6899

You can ring the hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments. This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

