

# BreastCheck Results: Patient Discussion Guide

This information may support you in your discussions with patients about their **screening** mammogram results. BreastCheck sends letters to patients after each screening mammogram. These letters include:

1. the patient's screening mammogram result,
2. the patient's breast density, and
3. information about breast cancer risk reduction.

## Screening Mammogram Result

### Normal (negative)

No abnormalities were found in the mammogram images.

BreastCheck will:

1. Send the patient and healthcare provider a result letter within two weeks.
2. Send the patient a letter within one to two years for their next screening mammogram.

### Abnormal (positive)

The mammogram showed an abnormality that requires follow-up testing. Women who go for follow-up testing do not usually have cancer. About 90% of women who have follow-up testing after having a mammogram at BreastCheck will not have breast cancer.



BreastCheck will:

1. Contact the patient by phone with the result and follow-up test information.
2. Directly refer and coordinate further test(s). Follow-up test(s) may include:
  - diagnostic mammogram
  - ultrasound
  - biopsy
  - other testing
3. Send the patient and healthcare provider a letter with the result and follow-up test information within two weeks.

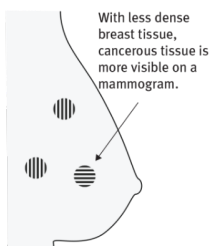
## Breast Density

At BreastCheck, mammographic density is assessed by a radiologist and reported to patients using the Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System (BI-RADS). The BI-RADS measuring system groups breast density into four categories:

LEGEND:

-  dense breast tissue
-  cancerous tissue

a. almost entirely fatty



b. scattered areas of fibroglandular density



c. heterogeneously dense



d. extremely dense\*



Plain language is used in patient materials:

a. almost all fatty tissue

b. mainly fatty tissue with some scattered areas of dense tissue

c. mixture of fatty and dense tissue

d. almost entirely dense tissue

IMAGES USED WITH PERMISSION OF BC CANCER, 2018.

\*About 5% of women in Manitoba who have had a screening mammogram have extremely dense breasts.

## Breast Density Continued...

- **Breast density is not an abnormal finding.** It is a measure of the ratio of glandular and fibrous connective tissue to fatty tissue in the breast.
  - **Breast density can only be assessed on a mammogram by a radiologist.** It is not related to the way breasts look or feel, and cannot be measured with a clinical exam.
  - **Breast density can affect breast cancer risk in two ways:**
    1. Dense breast tissue masks cancerous tissue on mammograms, thereby decreasing the sensitivity.
    2. Increased breast density is an independent risk factor for breast cancer.
- Despite this increased risk, there is no known association between dense breasts and increased breast cancer mortality.
- **There is insufficient evidence to show that women with dense breasts who are otherwise at average risk, should have more frequent mammograms or different screening tests (e.g. MRI, ultrasound).** Mammography is the most effective screening test for women age 50-74 to reduce breast cancer mortality. We do not recommend referring women for additional testing based only on their density.
  - **No screening test is perfect.** Encourage patients to know what looks and feels normal for their breasts and to book an appointment if they notice any changes in their breasts, even if their most recent screening mammogram was normal.

### Changes to pay attention to include:



Puckering of skin



Change in the nipple



New or bloody discharge



Change in the size, shape or colour



Thickened hard skin that feels different than the rest of the breast tissue



A new lump

## Breast Cancer Risk Reduction

Encourage your patients to reduce their breast cancer risk with these healthy lifestyle behaviours:

- Do not start smoking tobacco, quit if they do, avoid second-hand smoke and keep tobacco sacred
- Be physically active
- Avoid long periods of sitting
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans and lentils
- Limit fast foods and other highly processed foods, sugar-sweetened drinks and red meat
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Limit alcohol intake to less than one drink per day
- Discuss the benefits and risks of long-term use of hormone therapy after menopause
- Get screened for breast cancer to reduce their risk of dying from breast cancer

REFERENCES CAN BE VIEWED AT [CANCERCARE.MB.CA/SCREENING/HCP](https://cancercare.mb.ca/screening/hcp)