

## BREAST AWARENESS & SCREENING

Northern Ireland's Leading Local Cancer Charity



## Breast Awareness

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in females with approximately **1,000 women diagnosed** and **300 women who lose their lives** to the disease each year in Northern Ireland.

The most effective proven method to reduce deaths from breast cancer is through regular screening of women at risk, but being breast aware is also vitally important.

## Being breast aware

Being breast aware means knowing what your breasts look like and how they feel. If you know what is normal for you, it will be easy to detect a change.

Most breast changes will be harmless but if you're concerned it's a good idea to see your doctor for proper advice.



## When to check

- A week after your monthly period
- If you are breast feeding check once a month just after a feed
- Check on the first day of the month if you no longer have a monthly period



## Breast screening at Action Cancer



Action Cancer offers digital breast screening every two years for self-referring women **aged 40 - 49 and 70+** (more information overleaf). The screening service is available from Action Cancer House in Belfast (Mon-Fri) and onboard the Big Bus (Tues-Sat), which travels across Northern Ireland visiting communities and workplaces.

Screening can detect changes which might not be seen or felt during a breast examination. It is still important however, to be breast aware in between screening.

## How to check

**You might like to check in the bath or shower with soapy hands so that you become familiar with your breasts:**

- Look in the mirror with arms at your side
- Raise arms above your head and look again
- Lean forward with hands on your hips and look again for any new change in the shape of your breasts
- With soapy hands you can easily check one breast at a time
- Use the right hand to check the left breast and the left hand to check the right breast
- Keep your fingers together and use them to slide over the whole of each breast and up under the armpit
- You don't need to squeeze or poke at your breasts too hard; firm flat pressure is best

## What to look out for

**Being breast aware makes it easier for you to spot new changes such as:**

- Change in the shape or size of your breast
- A lump or thickness in the breast or under the armpit
- Change in the skin – any dimpling, puckering or redness
- Nipple discharge – bleeding or any heavy discharge
- Change in the position of a nipple – pulled inwards or pointing in a different direction
- Rash on the nipple
- Veins that stand out more than normal in one of your breasts
- A pain or odd sensation that is not normal for you



To book a screening appointment at Action Cancer's clinic please phone **028 9080 3344**



## Early detection could save your life!

## Action Cancer provides...

### Early Detection

Breast screening services and health checks available from the Big Bus and Action Cancer House in Belfast.

### Support Services

Complementary therapy, acupuncture, counselling, life coaching, peer mentoring and our Positive Living Programmes are available for those impacted by cancer in order to enhance quality of life and learn coping strategies.

### Education

As a local charity with a focus on cancer awareness, prevention and detection, the health promotion team deliver a range of services and programmes to schools, communities and workplaces across Northern Ireland.

**Action Cancer is Northern Ireland's leading local cancer charity. All of the services we provide are confidential. We depend heavily on public and business donations to keep our services going.**



# Breast Screening at Action Cancer

Action Cancer is the only charity in Northern Ireland to offer breast screening to women aged 40 - 49 and 70+ who fall outside of the NHS age range (50 - 70).

To arrange an appointment please call us on **028 9080 3344**

## Where is this service available?

From Action Cancer House in Belfast (Mon – Fri) or on the Action Cancer Big Bus (Tues – Sat) which travels across Northern Ireland visiting communities and workplaces.

## Additional Information

Evening clinics at Action Cancer House are available each month for those who wish to attend screening outside of office hours. We can also provide longer appointment slots for those with special needs – just request this when making an appointment.

## What to expect

When you call for an appointment staff will take your relevant details, check that you have no symptoms and that you fall into the screening age range for Action Cancer.

When you arrive for your appointment you will be asked to complete a simple form before your screening. The female radiographer will explain what the mammogram procedure involves and answer any queries you may have.

During the mammogram your breasts will be held firmly in the machine: this keeps you still and ensures the best possible detail on the image. The digital screening used by Action Cancer delivers two main benefits; it provides a lower radiation dose and is proven to better screen the more dense breast tissue of younger women.

At least four images will be taken after which you will be free to go. The entire appointment should take around 20 minutes.

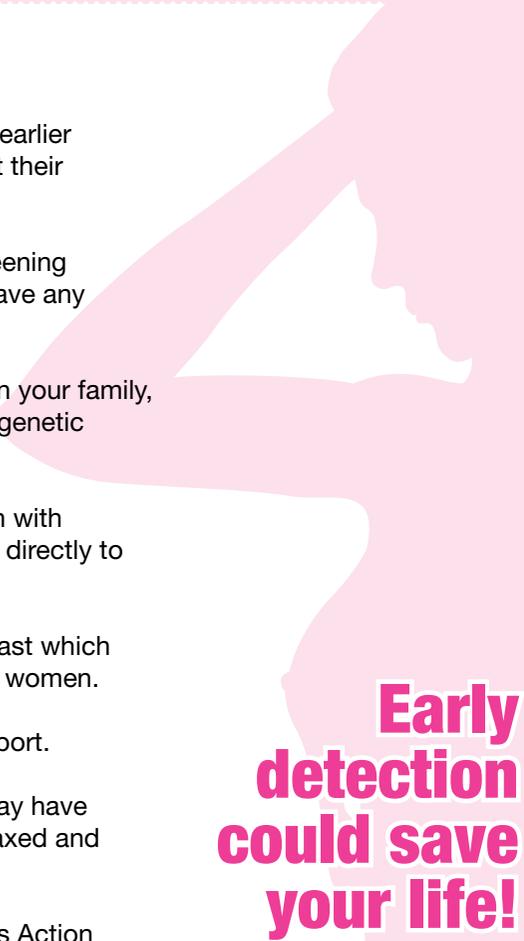
## What happens next?

Within three weeks both you and your GP will be sent the same letter which will give a normal result or may ask you to go for further tests at a one-stop breast clinic. While a referral for extra tests can cause anxiety, it is important to remember that **the majority of women referred do not receive a diagnosis of breast cancer.**

We recommend a mammogram every two years. In the meantime remain breast aware (see overleaf) and if you notice any changes in your breast see your GP.

## Breast Facts:

- Fact** Screening aims to detect cancer in its earlier stages when chances of survival are at their highest.
- Fact** There is no evidence to show that screening women under 40 is beneficial. If you have any concerns see your GP.
- Fact** If you have a history of breast cancer in your family, go to your GP who may refer you to a genetic screening programme.
- Fact** Action Cancer does not screen women with symptoms. If you have a symptom, go directly to your GP.
- Fact** The mammogram compresses the breast which may cause a little discomfort for some women.
- Fact** A lot of women come together for support.
- Fact** Experience shows that women who may have felt nervous were reassured by our relaxed and supportive environment.
- Fact** Our screening is free of charge. It costs Action Cancer £80 per screening. We receive no funding and rely entirely on donations.
- Fact** Our screening service detects an average of six or seven cancers in every 1,000 women screened.



# Early detection could save your life!



## Saved



**Anne Nelson,**  
Cookstown

My cancer was detected through a routine screening with Action Cancer. Being proactive about my health meant I detected the cancer in its earlier stages when treatment can be more successful. I feel I owe my life to Action Cancer because if it hadn't been for their screening programme I might not be here to tell my story. ”

## Supported



**Joy Montgomery,**  
Belfast

After both my daughter and daughter-in-law were diagnosed with breast cancer my GP recommended I contact Action Cancer's counselling service. It was such a relief to talk to someone outside of the family and to realise the way I was feeling was entirely normal. ”

## Reassured



**Jo McNelis,**  
Omagh

For years my four sisters and I have gone to get our breasts checked at Action Cancer House in Belfast – we call it our 'Boob Day'. Thankfully all our screenings have been normal. The peace of mind this offers us is immeasurable. ”