

When members of the same family have been diagnosed with the same disease, it is natural to wonder if it is due to an inherited factor.

This brochure answers important questions about breast cancer and family history.

## Did you know?

- Most women who are diagnosed with breast cancer **don't have a family history of the disease.**
- Breast cancer is a common disease which is largely associated with **increasing age.**
- Developing breast cancer **does not mean you have necessarily inherited a faulty gene,** or that you will pass it on to your children.
- The **earlier a cancer is detected,** the greater the likelihood of successful treatment.

### About BreastScreen NSW

BreastScreen NSW is a free breast screening program with over 200 locations in NSW.

The program is especially **recommended for women aged 50 to 74 years.** However, all women over the age of 40 are eligible for screening through the program.

#### Contact us

To make an appointment at a location near you **13 20 50**

#### To find out more

[www.breastscreen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.breastscreen.nsw.gov.au)

#### For an interpreter's assistance

**13 14 50** (TTY 13 36 77)

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Breast cancer  
and family  
history

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**13 20 50**

20 minutes every 2 years  
could save your life

[breastscreen.nsw.gov.au](http://breastscreen.nsw.gov.au)

1. Phone 13 20 50 2. Book an Appointment 

## What does it mean to have a family history of breast cancer?

You are considered to have a 'family history' of the disease if at least one blood relative has had breast cancer.

Many women have someone in their family that has been diagnosed with breast cancer. This can often happen by chance due to how common the disease is.

### Your family history becomes important when...

- **More than one relative** on the same side of your family (your mother's or your father's) has been diagnosed with breast cancer.
- **Relatives** with breast cancer are closer to you (e.g. sister rather than cousin) and were less than 50 years old when first diagnosed.
- **Male relatives** have been diagnosed with breast cancer.
- Relatives have had breast cancer in **both** breasts or have had both breast and ovarian cancer.

9 out of 10 women diagnosed with breast cancer do not have a family history.

## Does a family history of breast cancer mean I will develop the disease?

In a very small number of cases, breast cancer can be caused by an inherited faulty gene. While women with this faulty gene are at an increased risk of breast cancer, **developing breast cancer is not a certainty.**

### If I have a family history of breast cancer, when and how often should I be screened?

BreastScreen NSW recommends a regular mammogram **every 2 years** for all women aged 50 – 74 years. For some women, the nature of their family history may require them to have a mammogram more frequently.

From the age of 40, it is recommended that women have a mammogram annually (every year) if:

- they have a first-degree relative (a person's parent, sibling or child) who has been diagnosed with breast cancer before the age of 50
- they are assessed by BreastScreen NSW and/or their doctor as being 'High Risk (Category 3)', using the Familial Risk Assessment – Breast and Ovarian Cancer tool, developed by Cancer Australia.

If you fall into either of these categories, you may need additional monitoring and tests that BreastScreen NSW is unable to provide. You may wish to talk to your doctor about a referral to a familial cancer clinic for further assessment.

**If you have a blood relative who has been diagnosed with breast cancer over 50 years old and have no other contributing factors you are at similar risk to developing breast cancer as the general population. You will be offered a mammogram every two years.**

### What do I do if I am concerned about my family history?

If you are worried about your family history of breast or ovarian cancer you should **speak to your doctor.**

**If any new cases** of breast cancer or ovarian cancer have been diagnosed in your family **since your last mammogram** it is important to tell your doctor and/or BreastScreen NSW.

BreastScreen NSW collects your family history information each time you attend for a mammogram. **It is important to tell BreastScreen NSW if this information changes.**