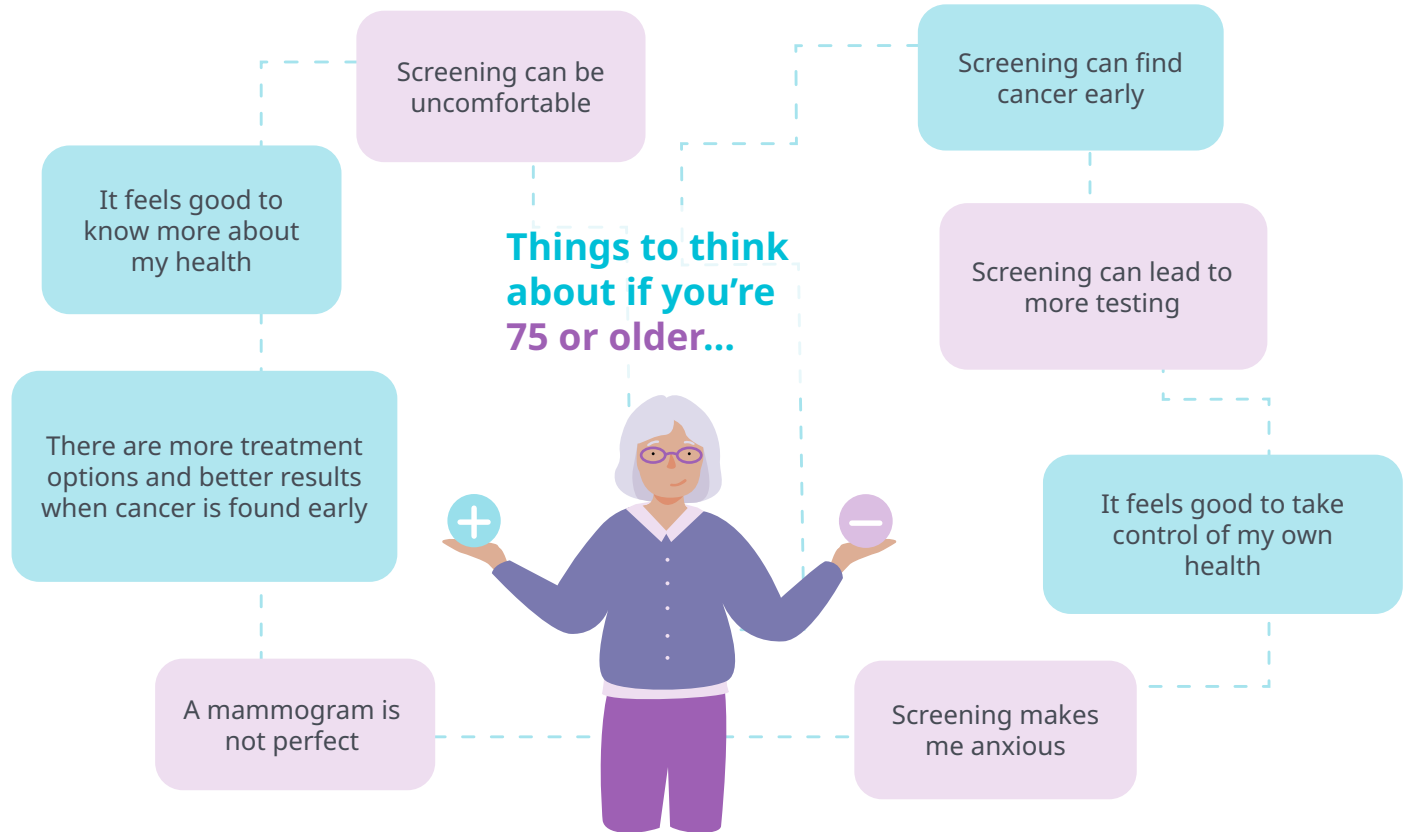


# Should I get screening mammograms if I'm 75 or older?

Mammograms (x-rays of the breasts) can help find breast cancer early, before you notice any changes and when it is easier to treat. Your age and family history (if your parent, child or full sibling has had breast cancer) can affect your risk.



## Why is it important to make an informed choice?

Breast cancer can often be slow-growing and may not cause any symptoms in your lifetime, especially if your past results have been normal. This is why if you are 75 or older, it is important to make an informed choice about whether to continue screening. This guide helps you decide what's best for you.



### **Important:** If you:

- **Have a previous history of breast cancer:** See a health care provider to arrange appropriate diagnostic breast imaging.
- **Have breast implants:** See a health care provider to arrange appropriate diagnostic breast imaging.
- **Have breast cancer symptoms, such as a lump, fluid from your nipple(s) or any other changes to your breast(s):** See a health care provider right away. You may need diagnostic testing.
- **Have had a mammogram on both breasts in the last 12 months:** You must wait at least 1 year before having another screening mammogram.
- **Have a parent, child or full sibling who has or had breast cancer:** You can continue to screen annually. Please speak with a health care provider to check if breast screening remains right for you.

## Benefits and limitations

Think about the benefits and limitations of mammograms. Check off the points that matter to you. Add any other points in the blank rows.

Benefits	Limitations
<p><b>Helps find cancer earlier:</b> A mammogram can find cancer when it is small, which means more treatment options and a higher chance of success. Finding and treating cancer early gives me more time and energy to spend with family and friends.</p> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>A mammogram is not perfect:</b> It can miss some cancers due to its location or the density of my breast tissue (false negative), or it can find cancers that would not have caused problems in my lifetime (overdiagnosis).</p> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>May help me live longer:</b> Having a mammogram may help me live longer since screening can help find cancer when it is smaller and easier to treat.</p> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>More testing:</b> I may need more testing after my screening mammogram, such as a diagnostic mammogram, ultrasound or biopsy, to look more closely at my breast(s).</p> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Feels good to take care of my health:</b> A mammogram helps me look after my breast health so that I stay aware of my overall health. Having a mammogram lets me take care of myself and that feels good.</p> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Pain:</b> Having a mammogram can be uncomfortable due to the pressure placed on my breast while the x-ray images are being taken. Compression is needed to spread the breast tissue and keep my breast in place to avoid blurry images.</p> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>My risk increases with age:</b> My breast cancer risk increases with age. Over 80% of new breast cancers diagnosed each year in BC are among those aged 50 or older.</p> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Possible treatment:</b> I may need treatment after my screening mammogram, such as surgery, medications, radiation therapy and/or chemotherapy.</p> <p>I understand that the effects of treatment can vary from person to person. They can be positive or negative depending on someone's age, health status, values and goals. I understand that this is a deeply personal decision and that life years gained do not always mean better quality of life.</p>
<p><b>Provides me with reassurance:</b> Knowing whether or not I have breast cancer will let me better understand my health and make good choices for the future. With improvements in healthcare and increasing life expectancy, screening mammograms can still benefit me after age 74.</p> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Screening anxiety:</b> I may feel anxious, worried or stressed during my mammogram and after when I wait for my results.</p> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### What if I am age 75 or older and have never had a screening mammogram?

If you are in good general health, you can get a screening mammogram every 1 or 2 years based on your risk level. A health care provider can help you decide if screening is right for you.

## Think about your general health

Now that you have thought about the benefits and limitations of breast screening, think about your health and how screening could affect the rest of your life: **Do the benefits of screening and any treatment that I may need outweigh the risks of screening and the impact it could have on my quality of life?**

Your health can affect whether you may benefit from screening and any recommended treatments. This is because as people get older, screening could cause more harm than good depending on the person's health. For example, recovering from a breast biopsy could be more difficult and/or painful for someone with dementia than someone without.

Here are some questions to help you think about whether screening is right for you. Write your answer beside each question:

Is it important for me to get screened? Why or why not?

Am I healthy and/or strong enough to get screened and go through any recommended follow-up tests such as a biopsy?

If my mammogram found breast cancer, would treating it come first before managing my other health condition(s)? Will it change how my other health condition(s) are managed?

If my mammogram found breast cancer and I needed cancer treatment, would treatments for my other health condition(s) get in the way or not work as well?

If there were any unexpected problems from the follow-up procedures and/or treatment, how would it affect my quality of life?

## Your decision

### What is your decision?

- I will continue getting mammograms
- I am undecided
- I will not continue getting mammograms

### Are you sure of your choice?

		Yes	No
<b>Sure of myself</b>	Do you feel sure about the best choice for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Understand information</b>	Do you know the benefits and limitations of screening?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Risks and benefits</b>	Are you sure about which benefits and limitations matter most to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Encouragement</b>	Do you have enough support and advice to make an informed choice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## Still not sure?

Take this guide to a health care provider for support. Write down any questions you may have below to ask them at your appointment:



### Disclaimer

Information shared here is for informational purposes only. It should not be interpreted as medical advice, professional diagnosis, or medical opinion without first seeing a health care provider. This information should not replace the need to see a health care provider for any health-related concerns.

### References

1. Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. (2022). Should I Continue Having Mammograms? For Women Age 75 to 84 Years. Boston. Available at [https://eprognosis.ucsf.edu/decision\\_aids/Mammography\\_75-84.pdf](https://eprognosis.ucsf.edu/decision_aids/Mammography_75-84.pdf).
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