

Information for woman with breast implants

CCDHB Radiology Service – Mammography Wellington Hospital

Q. Is breast cancer screening effective for women with implants?

A. Breast cancer screening can find most breast cancers present at the time, but like many medical tests, it is not 100% effective. You should note that your implants will obscure some of your breast tissue, making it more difficult to detect small breast cancers.

Q. Is it safe for me to have regular mammograms?

A. Mammography is generally safe for women with implants; however there are some risks, which would include.

- Ruptures or leaks

There is an extremely small chance that the pressure placed on the implant by the mammography machine could cause the implant to rupture or break. If your implant has already ruptured or started to leak it is possible that having a mammogram could increase the amount of silicone or saline spreading into the tissue.

- Change of shape

Some women with implants develop unusually hard breasts, known as capsular contracture. This occurs because the scar tissue surrounding the implant tightens. It is possible that the pressure of the mammogram could cause the scar tissue to

crack. This is not harmful in itself; however your breasts may feel different in shape and softer in texture afterwards. Both breasts may react differently.

- Radiation exposure

So that as much of the breast tissue is imaged, the number of images taken from a routine mammogram is increased. This results in more exposure than for women without implants. However, the total radiation dose is still very small. For the majority of women the benefits of the mammogram outweigh the risk of any harm from the mammogram.

Q. Will having the mammogram be painful?

A. You may experience some discomfort, as the implant usually needs to be pushed aside to expose the maximum amount of breast tissue. Most women find this discomfort does not last long.

Q. Will I be notified of any problems?

A. Yes. However, not all leaks or ruptures show on a mammogram. If a leak or rupture is found, your referring Doctor will notify you.