

Changes to the Ontario Breast Screening Program: Information for Family Physicians

Effective October 8, 2024, the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) has expanded to offer screening to **average-risk individuals starting at age 40**, down from age 50.

Eligible women, Two-Spirit, trans and nonbinary people may **self-refer for a mammogram at any OBSP location from ages 40 to 74**. Most people in the 40 to 49 age group who decide to get screened for breast cancer should get screened with mammography every two years.

The OCFP has compiled this summary with resources, including support for patient conversations toward making informed decisions about screening.

Why screen younger individuals

OBSP expansion is based in part on analysis that found:

- Females ages 40 to 49 who received screening mammography in Ontario outside the OBSP were more likely to be diagnosed at an earlier stage; and
- Inequities in mammography screening participation in Ontario females ages 40 to 49, including fewer mammograms among people in the most materially deprived communities, lowest income neighbourhoods and most ethnically concentrated communities.

Benefits and harms

Still, **comparison of starting screening at 40 and starting screening at 50** highlights the crucial need for **informed decisions**:



- There may be a small reduction in breast cancer deaths and mortality.
- There are more false positives when starting screening at age 40.
- There may be a small increase in overdiagnosis (i.e., finding a cancer that would have never caused harm if left untreated).

Resources for Family Physicians

- **Helping People Ages 40 to 49 Decide Whether to Screen for Breast Cancer** — physician conversation guide
- **Ontario Breast Screening Program Recommendations Summary** — including eligibility
- **Breast Cancer Screening and Diagnosis Pathway Map** — an overview of best practices in the care continuum
- **Screening Activity Report** (requires ONE® ID login) — available to all patient enrolment model primary care physicians with enrolled and screen-eligible patients (and others servicing the Sioux Lookout Municipality and Sioux Lookout Zone).

Resources for Patients

- **Breast Cancer Screening for People Ages 40 to 49 — What You Need to Know**
- **My CancerIQ** (personalized risk assessment)
- Trained navigators for conversations on breast cancer screening are available at **Health811** or by calling 811.
- **Mammogram screening wait times and locations**
- Appointment booking: 1-800-668-9304

