

NHS Breast Screening Programme

Extending the screening age range

Why have I been sent this leaflet?

You have been sent this leaflet along with your invitation for screening because you live in an area where we are starting to extend the age range for women invited for breast screening.

Why is the breast screening age range changing?

At the moment, all women between the ages of 50 and 70 are invited for screening every 3 years. Women over the age of 70 can request screening every three years by making an appointment at their local screening unit, but they do not receive invitations.

In December 2007, the Department of Health's *Cancer Reform Strategy* announced that from 2012 the NHS Breast Screening Programme would be extended to cover women between the ages of 47 and 73. This means that all women will get two extra screening invitations in their lifetime. It also means that all women will get their first screening invitation before their 50th birthday.

How will this age extension happen?

The age extension will be gradually phased in across England. Initially, we will invite just some of the women from the new age groups. Eventually, all women in the new age groups will be included.

How does the age extension work?

All women aged 50-70 continue to get their screening invitations as normal.

The female population that falls within the new screening age groups of 47-49 and 71-73 has been randomised which means that initially the age extension only affects half of the women in these age groups.

Randomising the phasing in of the age extension means that the net benefit of extending the age range for breast screening can be scientifically evaluated. Researchers at Oxford University will be analysing the results on behalf of the NHS Breast Screening Programme.

What about women aged 47-49 or 71-73 who haven't been invited yet – can they be screened anyway?

Any woman aged over 70 can request screening every three years, as now. They simply contact their local screening unit to make an appointment.

Women aged 47-49 who have not been invited yet can still ask to be screened if they live in an area that has started the age extension.

Women aged 47-49 in areas that have not yet started the age extension, cannot request screening. Once age extension starts in their area, they will either be invited, or can request screening.

Where can I find out more about breast screening, and the age extension?

You can find more information about breast screening, and the age extension in breast screening, on the NHS Cancer Screening Programmes website at www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk.

Summary

You have been sent this leaflet because you live in an area where the age extension to the NHS Breast Screening Programme is being introduced.

- **Aged 47-49?** You have been randomly selected to be invited for screening.
- **Aged 50-70?** You are being invited for screening as normal.
- **Aged 71-73?** You have been randomly selected to be invited for screening.

Please also read the enclosed leaflet on breast screening, to help you decide whether or not to come for your appointment.

A large print version of this leaflet and versions in languages other than English are available from the NHS Cancer Screening Programmes website at www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk

