

Temporary change to BreastScreen Victoria screening criteria FAQs – For GPs

Background

During COVID-19, BreastScreen Victoria (BSV) has reduced the number of appointments available to clients to carry out breast screening safely. The program is currently experiencing high demand for its service, and high wait times for an appointment at some clinics.

To ensure that BSV can continue to deliver a safe and sustainable service, a temporary measure is in place to screen those most at risk of developing breast cancer first.

BSV is prioritising appointments for clients in the **50-74 target age group**. Breast cancer affects more Victorian women aged 50-74, who are at a higher risk of developing the disease. Clients who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in any age group are also prioritised for an appointment.

Anyone **aged 40-49 or 75+** who wants to have a breast screen for the first time, or is not recommended to screen annually by BSV, will go on a waiting list. These clients are still eligible for the program and will be invited to screen as soon as there are appointments available at their preferred clinic.

BSV estimates the average waiting time for an appointment could be **six months or more** for impacted clients.

Given the increased waiting times, please recommend an alternative imaging provider or pathway if clinically indicated. Doctors should perform a risk assessment for these patients and arrange alternative imaging through a private facility or through the public hospital breast clinics or diagnostic imaging services where appropriate.

BSV is advising clients to stay breast aware, to consult their doctor if they have any symptoms now or notice any breast changes or new symptoms, or if they have concerns about waiting for a breast screen.

Please note, BSV is a population-screening program for eligible Victorians with **no breast symptoms**.

For more information and advice on how you can support your patients, please refer to Frequently Asked Questions below.

Patient FAQs

Patient question	Answers/Actions
<p>1. I am aged 40-49 or 75+, and I have <i>never had</i> a breast screen. Can I book an appointment with BreastScreen Victoria?</p>	<p>You are still eligible for BreastScreen Victoria's program. However, due to very high demand for the service, there is a waiting list for an appointment.</p> <p>It may take six months or more to get an appointment with BreastScreen Victoria.</p> <p>If you're concerned about your breast health, I recommend we look at a breast cancer risk assessment and discuss whether an alternate pathway is appropriate for you [doctor to provide further advice].</p> <p>EXCEPTION: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients aged 40-49 or 75+ can book an appointment regardless of whether they have screened previously or not.</p> <p>If you decide to go on the waiting list, please call 13 20 50.</p>
<p>2. I am aged 40-49 or 75+ and <i>normally screen every two years</i>. Can I book an appointment with BreastScreen Victoria?</p>	<p>You are still eligible for BreastScreen Victoria's program. However, due to very high demand for the service, there is an increased wait time for an appointment.</p> <p>It may take six months or more to get an appointment with BreastScreen Victoria.</p> <p>If you're concerned about your breast health, I recommend we look at a breast cancer risk assessment and discuss whether an alternate pathway is appropriate for you [doctor to provide further advice].</p> <p>EXCEPTION: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients aged 40-49 or 75+ can book an appointment regardless of whether they have screened previously or not.</p> <p>If you decide to go on the waiting list, please call 13 20 50.</p>
<p>3. I am aged 40-49 and recommended to <i>screen every year (annually)</i> by BreastScreen Victoria. Can I book an appointment?</p>	<p>Yes, you can book an appointment with BreastScreen Victoria without going on a waiting list. Please call 13 20 50 or book online at www.breastscreen.org.au.</p> <p>[Please note, BreastScreen Victoria does not provide annual screening to those aged 75+]</p>
<p>4. How do I know if I'm an annual screener, and therefore able to</p>	<p>BSV's family history risk is determined at a breast screen appointment. You would have been advised by BSV that you are at increased risk and recommended to screen annually.</p>

<p>book an appointment?</p>	<p>If you have screened with BreastScreen Victoria previously and were recommended to screen annually, you can book an appointment without going on a waiting list.</p> <p>[Please note, BreastScreen Victoria does not provide annual screening to those aged 75+]</p>
<p>5. I am aged 40-49 or 75+ and have never screened with BreastScreen Victoria. I am worried about my family history risk. What should I do?</p>	<p>There are online risk assessment tools that can help to look at your family history risk and guide our discussions about screening options.</p> <p>i-Prevent is an online breast cancer risk assessment and risk management tool from the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre that you can complete.</p> <p>I can also use the Cancer Australia FRA-BOC online tool to look at your risk.</p> <p>[For doctor background only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure patient the majority of women are at population risk, based on their family history • Identify women who should be referred to a family cancer clinic for further assessment and advice] <p>After completing an online assessment tool, if you are concerned about your breast health, I recommend we discuss whether an alternate pathway is appropriate for you [doctor to provide further advice].</p>
<p>6. I am aged 40-49 or 75+ and <i>have breast cancer symptoms</i>. I want a breast screen. What should I do?</p>	<p>BSV is for clients who have <u>no</u> symptoms.</p> <p>If you notice any breast changes or symptoms, I can advise you on the next steps.</p> <p>If you have symptoms, we can discuss diagnostic imaging. This is different to the BreastScreen program and involves more targeted tests and quicker results.</p>
<p>7. Why has BSV decided on this temporary measure?</p>	<p>During COVID-19, BSV has had to reduce the number of appointments to allow more time in-between clients, to create physical distancing and clean thoroughly, so breast screens are carried out safely.</p> <p>As a result, they're experiencing high demand for the service and high wait times at some clinics.</p> <p>They've introduced this temporary measure to make sure they can continue to deliver a safe and sustainable service.</p>

	<p>The risk of developing breast cancer increases with age, with most breast cancers occurring over the age of 50. Screening mammography is known to be most effective in women aged 50-74 age group.</p>
<p>8. Where can I get more information?</p>	<p>Talk to me your doctor, or any other doctor, if you have any concerns.</p> <p>Visit breastscreen.org.au or call 13 20 50.</p>