











What is the difference between a screening and a diagnostic mammogram?

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast.

A **screening mammogram** (or breast screen) is done regularly to check well women for breast cancer. Further tests may be done to reach a diagnosis if a screening mammogram finds a possible abnormality.

A **diagnostic mammogram** is requested by a doctor if a woman has a breast symptom or problem.

This table summarises the differences between these tests:

BreastScreen services			
	Screening mammogram	Assessment	Diagnostic mammogram
 Why	Regular breast x-rays to check for cancer in women without symptoms . Screening aims to find breast cancer early when it's too small to be felt by a woman or her doctor.	Further tests to check a possible abnormal breast screen result.	Breast x-rays to investigate breast symptoms such as a lump, pain, thickening, nipple discharge, or a change in breast size or shape. For routine follow up of certain breast conditions.
 Who	For women aged 40 and over. Women with symptoms are advised to see their doctor for a physical examination and referral for a diagnostic mammogram .	For women whose breast screen showed a possible abnormal area.	For women of any age, but usually over 40, who are referred by their doctor.
 Where	At BreastScreen Victoria screening service .	At BreastScreen Victoria Reading and Assessment service .	At a public hospital diagnostic imaging department or private medical imaging practice or breast clinic . Diagnostic mammograms are not offered within BreastScreen.
 When	There may be a wait of several weeks for an appointment. Most women are asked to return in 2 years' time.	Arranged as soon as possible after a screening mammogram shows a possible abnormality.	They can usually be arranged without delay . Other tests may be requested by the doctor at the same appointment.
 Referral	No referral needed. Women aged 50-74 are sent routine reminder letters.	A woman may be sent a letter approximately 2-6 weeks after her breast screen recalling her to an Assessment Service for further tests. A Nurse Counsellor may also discuss this over the phone with her.	Doctor's referral required.
 Tests	Standard mammogram (2 images of each breast for most women).	May be further special mammogram views of the area of concern. Other tests such as ultrasound, physical examination and biopsy may be performed to reach a diagnosis.	Standard mammogram views are performed and the images are usually reviewed by a specialist doctor so that more pictures can be taken if needed to look more closely at an area of concern. Other tests such as ultrasound and biopsy may be performed to reach a diagnosis.
 Cost	Free	Free	Varies. Usually no charge at public hospitals. There may be a Medicare rebate at private practices but a 'gap' payment may also be required.
 Results	Results may take 2-4 weeks and are sent to the woman and her doctor (if she agrees).	Mammogram and other imaging results available on the day. Biopsy results up to 1 week.	Mammogram and other imaging results usually available promptly. Biopsy results up to 1 week. Results are sent to the referring doctor.