



Expansion of the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) to People Ages 40 to 49: Frequently Asked Questions for Primary Care Providers

1. Why is the average risk Ontario Breast Screening Program expanding to include people ages 40 to 49?

The Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) is expanding to include eligible women, Two-Spirit people, trans people and nonbinary people ages 40 to 49 so they can have better access to breast cancer screening and experience the benefits of organized screening such as screening test result notification.

2. What are the recommendations for screening people ages 40 to 49 (eligibility, screening test, screening interval)?

The screening recommendations for people ages 40 to 49 are the same as for people ages 50 to 74.

Breast cancer screening through the Ontario Breast Screening Program will be offered to women, Two-Spirit people, trans people and nonbinary people ages 40 to 74 who:

- have no new breast cancer symptoms
- have no personal history of breast cancer
- have not had a mastectomy
- have not had a screening mammogram within the last 11 months
- If transfeminine, have used feminizing hormones for at least 5 years in a row

Most people ages 40 to 49 who decide to get screened and are at average risk of developing breast cancer should have a mammogram every two years. People ages 40 to 49 who are at increased risk of developing breast cancer due to their personal or family history or their mammogram results will be recalled in one year.

3. What is the Ontario Breast Screening Program's breast cancer screening recommendation for people ages 40 to 49?

People ages 40 to 49 should make an informed decision about whether breast cancer screening is right for them. Generally, people ages 40 to 49 have a lower chance of getting breast cancer than people ages 50 to 74, so the balance of potential benefits to potential harms of breast cancer screening may be different for people ages 40 to 49 than for people ages 50 to 74.

The Ontario Breast Screening Program is encouraging people ages 40 to 49 to have a conversation about breast cancer screening, the potential benefits and potential harms of breast cancer screening, their personal risk for breast cancer and what matters most to them in taking care of their health.

People can talk to their primary care provider or a Health811 navigator by dialing 811. Prevention specialists, located in certain communities, can also help people ages 40 to 49 make an informed decision about whether breast cancer screening is right for them. Prevention specialists are mainly located in communities with underserved and equity-deserving populations.

To help people ages 40 to 49 understand their personal risk for breast cancer and steps they can take to lower their risk, people can visit mycanceriq.ca/Cancers/Breast and complete the online questionnaire.

4. Why are people ages 40 to 49 encouraged to have a conversation about breast cancer screening before getting screened?

The chances of getting breast cancer and the balance of potential benefits and potential harms of breast cancer screening may be different for people ages 40 to 49 than for people ages 50 to 74. Talking to a primary care provider, Health811 navigator or prevention specialist about their personal risk for breast cancer, the potential benefits and potential harms of breast cancer screening and what matters most to them in taking care of their health can help people ages 40 to 49 make an informed decision about whether breast cancer screening is right for them.

5. What are the potential benefits and potential harms of screening for people ages 40 to 49?

Regardless of someone's age, regular breast cancer screening can have potential benefits and potential harms.

Potential benefits of regular breast cancer screening:

- Screening can find breast cancer early, which may mean that:
 - Treatment has a better chance of working.
 - Treatment can be less intensive or invasive.
 - The chance of dying from breast cancer is lower.

Potential harms of regular breast cancer screening:

- A screening test result can sometimes be abnormal when someone does not actually have cancer (a false-positive). This may result in additional testing.
- Screening can find a cancer that would have never caused harm if left untreated (overdiagnosis). This could result in a surgery or treatment that was not needed.

However, the chances of getting breast cancer generally increase with age and the balance of potential benefits to potential harms of regular breast cancer screening may be different for people ages 40 to 49 than for people ages 50 to 74. For example:

- 1 to 2 more breast cancer deaths can be prevented from starting screening at age 40 than at age 50 (per 1000 people over a lifetime of screening).
- People who start screening at age 40 have 519 more false-positives and 62 more unneeded biopsies over their lifetimes than people who start screening at age 50.
- 2 more breast cancer cases are overdiagnosed in people who start screening at age 40 than at age 50.

This data can also be found in the **“Helping people ages 40 to 49 decide whether to screen for breast cancer” breast cancer screening conversation guide.**

Data source: Trentham-Dietz A, Chapman CH, Jayasekera J, et al. Collaborative Modeling to Compare Different Breast Cancer

6. Do people ages 40 to 49 need a referral from a primary care provider to be screened through the Ontario Breast Screening Program?

People ages 40 to 49 who qualify for the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) and decide to get screened do not need a referral from a primary care provider. Similar to people ages 50 to 74, people ages 40 to 49 can self-refer by making an appointment directly at an OBSP site. Self-referral ensures that people without a primary care provider who choose to screen will have access to breast cancer screening and support for diagnostic follow-up, if needed.

7. How will mammogram appointment wait times be managed when people ages 40 to 49 become eligible for breast cancer screening?

The Ontario Wait Time Reporting website will report appointment wait times for mammograms at Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) locations. This will provide people with the option to search for OBSP locations and make an appointment at a location with a shorter wait time if they choose.

8. Can people who are pregnant or lactating be screened through the Ontario Breast Screening Program?

Yes, people who are pregnant or lactating can get screened through the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP). Getting screened with a mammogram during pregnancy or while lactating is safe and effective. Primary care providers should discuss breast cancer screening options with people who are pregnant or lactating and the signs and symptoms of pregnancy-associated breast cancer.

People who choose **not** to screen while they are pregnant can begin screening three months after giving birth, even if they are lactating. People who choose **not** to screen until they have finished lactating can resume screening based on their appropriate screening interval (e.g., 1 or 2 years).

(Note: This guidance applies to Average Risk OBSP participants only.)

9. How do people ages 40 to 49 become part of the Ontario Breast Screening Program?

To become part of the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP), people ages 40 to 49 can book an appointment for screening at an OBSP location. If someone age 40 to 49 has been screened before October 8, 2024, they will need to book an appointment at an OBSP location when they are due for their next mammogram to become part of the program. They will not automatically be enrolled.

10. Will people ages 40 to 49 get correspondence letters (invitations, results and breast density information, and recall letters)?

Starting October 8, 2024, eligible people ages 40 to 49 who decide to screen for breast cancer will receive normal results letters with breast density information and recall interval in the mail from Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario). In future, the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) will also send people ages 40 to 49 recall letters to tell people when they should be screened again. These letters will be launched as a part

of future program enhancements and timing is not yet confirmed. Post-launch, the OBSP will also assess sending letters to notify people ages 40 to 49 that they are eligible for breast cancer screening.

11. How will people ages 40 to 49 who decide to get screened through the Ontario Breast Screening Program get their screening results?

People ages 40 to 49 who decide to get screened for breast cancer at an Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) location will receive a normal result letter with their breast density information and recall interval in the mail from Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario).

If someone age 40 to 49 has an abnormal screening result, the OBSP location where they were screened will tell their primary care provider and may help coordinate a timely follow-up appointment. If someone age 40 to 49 has an abnormal result, but does not have a primary care provider, they will be connected with a doctor or nurse practitioner who can send them for more testing.

12. What happens if someone age 40 to 49 decides not to screen?

Eligible people ages 40 to 49 should make an informed decision about whether breast cancer screening is right for them. If someone chooses not to get screened, they can change their mind at any time.

Note, eligible people who do not start screening for breast cancer in their 40s will receive a breast cancer screening invitation letter from Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) when they turn 50.

13. What is the role of primary care providers in supporting breast cancer screening conversations with people ages 40 to 49?

Primary care providers can help people ages 40 to 49 make an informed decision about whether breast cancer screening is right for them by discussing their personal risk for breast cancer, the potential benefits and potential harms of breast cancer screening and what matters most to them in taking care of their health. Having conversations about breast cancer screening is important because generally, people ages 40 to 49 have a lower chance of getting breast cancer, so the balance of potential benefits to potential harms of breast cancer screening may be different than for people ages 50 to 74.

Primary care providers should be prepared to engage in discussions with people ages 40 to 49 who are interested in making an informed decision about whether breast cancer screening is right for them. The resource “Helping people ages 40 to 49 decide whether breast cancer screening is right for them” has been developed to support primary care providers in discussing breast cancer screening with people ages 40 to 49.

14. How can prevention specialists support breast cancer screening conversations with people ages 40 to 49?

Prevention specialists work in team-based primary care settings to help people develop a personalized Preventive Care Plan. They are mainly located in communities with underserved and equity-deserving populations.

Prevention specialists can have conversations with people ages 40 to 49 about breast cancer risk and what matters most to them in taking care of their health to help make an informed decision about whether breast cancer screening is right for them. Prevention specialists can also help people who choose to get screened for breast cancer find an Ontario Breast Screening Program site and support booking an appointment.

15. How can people ages 40 to 49 assess their personal risk for breast cancer?

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Ontario, but most breast cancers are found in people ages 50 and over. Each person's chance of getting breast cancer differs based on their individual risk factors. People can use My CancerIQ (mycanceriq.ca/Cancers/Breast) to understand how their risk of breast cancer compares to others in their age group and get personalized information on how they can decrease their risk of breast cancer. Understanding their own risk may help people decide about whether breast cancer screening is right for them.

Primary care providers can encourage people ages 40 to 49 to complete the My CancerIQ questionnaire. Understanding their own risk may help people decide about whether breast cancer screening is right for them. Primary care providers may also discuss the results of the questionnaire if they are talking with people about breast cancer screening.

For more information, visit mycanceriq.ca/Cancers/Breast. My CancerIQ is available in English and French.

16. What resources are available for people ages 40 to 49 who are deciding whether to get screened?

A new Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) web page will be available for the public with links to resources and information about screening for people ages 40 to 49.

The web page will include:

- Breast cancer screening information specifically for people ages 40 to 49
- Link to My CancerIQ, a free online tool to help people understand their personal risk of getting breast cancer and what they can do to lower their risk
- General information about the OBSP
- Information on how to book an appointment for screening and how to view appointment wait times for screening mammograms

For more information on the Ontario Breast Screening Program and breast cancer screening, people ages 40 to 49 can:

- Visit the Ontario Breast Screening Program website: cancercareontario.ca/obs
- Call the Ontario Health Contact Centre at 1-866-662-9233

17. What resources are available to help primary care providers talk about breast cancer screening with people ages 40 to 49?

At launch, the [Breast Screening Recommendations Summary](#) web page for primary care providers will be updated to reflect screening recommendations for people ages 40 to 49.

A resource for primary care providers "Helping people ages 40 to 49 decide whether to screen for breast cancer" has been developed and will be available on the [Screening Resources for Healthcare Providers web](#)

[page](#). This tool provides information about breast cancer screening for people 40 to 49 to support primary care providers when discussing breast cancer screening with their patients.

Provincial education webinars will be held prior to launch to learn more about the OBSP expansion to people ages 40 to 49.

In addition, a new Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) web page will be available for the public with links to resources and information about screening people ages 40 to 49. The web page will include:

- Link to a new information web page to help people ages 40 to 49 make an informed decision about whether breast cancer screening is right for them
- Link to My CancerIQ, a free online tool to help people understand their personal risk of getting breast cancer and what they can do to lower their risk
- Breast cancer screening information specifically for people ages 40 to 49
- General information about the OBSP
- Information on how to book an appointment for screening and how to view appointment wait times for screening mammograms

18. When can people ages 40 to 49 start making appointments to get screened?

People ages 40 to 49 who decide to screen for breast cancer can start making appointments at Ontario Breast Screening Program locations starting October 8, 2024.

- To find an OBSP location go to ontariohealth.ca/breastscreeninglocations. Appointments can also be made by calling the Ontario Breast Screening Program appointment booking line at 1-800-668-9304. Online booking is currently not available.

There are also two mobile health coaches that provide screening services to remote communities through the North West Regional Cancer Program (1-807-684-7777) and in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Regional Cancer Program (1-855-338-3131). Go to [Mobile Screening](#) for more information and to make an appointment.

Transportation to screening services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis people are also available through the Non-insured Health Benefits Program. Contact a local Non-insured Health Benefits Program Navigator to learn more.

19. How can people view mammogram appointment wait times at Ontario Breast Screening Program locations?

People can search for Ontario Breast Screening Program locations and see approximate wait times for screening mammogram appointments by visiting ontariohealth.ca/breastscreeninglocations

Need this information in an accessible format? 1-877-280-8538, TTY 1-800-855-0 info@ontariohealth.ca.