



Mobile mammograms

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Two pictures of your breast might save your life. Given the success of treatment for breast cancer,

that statement is not an overstatement. You can't go wrong being careful with your breast health; a screening mammogram can detect cancer much earlier than any self-exam.

Since 1988, the BC Screening Mammography Program (SMP) offered through the BC Cancer Agency has helped reduce breast cancer mortality with early detection. Your best chance for success comes with early diagnosis and treatment — and a screening mammogram help make that happen.

The highest risk for breast cancer is aging. (Most women diagnosed with breast cancer (70%) had no other risk factors.) The SMP is a free service available to all women in British Columbia between the ages of 40 and 79 without a doctor's referral. For women in other age groups, the free service is available with a doctor's request.

A mammogram is a quick and easy X-ray of the breast done in complete privacy by a specially trained female technologist and takes 10 to 15 minutes. She will take two x-rays of each breast. One is top-to-bottom, the other side-to-side. To minimize the exposure to x-rays, some compression is required. But the radiation should not be a concern either as it is equivalent to the background radiation received over 3-4 months of regular living.

In most cases, the results will indicate your breasts are normal. About seven percent will show

abnormal results, but this does not automatically mean 'cancer' as there are many reasons for an abnormal result including calcification or benign cysts. In these cases, you will be fast-tracked for further testing.

The BC Screening Mammography Program operates clinics around the province. There are 35 around BC, but since not everyone can reach these centres, there is also a mobile service that uses three vehicles that travel around the province. The equipment in these vans is similar to that in the fixed clinics, is required to meet Health Canada standards and is accredited by the Canadian Association of Cardiologists.

While Powell River has a permanent center, the Sunshine Coast, Sea-to-Sky and the Queen Char-

lottes are on the mobile service routes. Women on the Sunshine Coast should know that the SMP is coming to the area in June. Specifically, Gibsons will see the service June 18-21; Sechelt

from June 22-27; and Pender Harbour June 28-29.

An appointment is free for women aged 40 to 79 and is easily booked with a toll-free call to 1-800-663-9203. Learn more about the SMP and breast cancer at www.smpbc.ca, or contact the BC Cancer Agency.

A screening mammogram can be life-saving because it can find abnormalities long before they can be felt. And with early detection come more treatment options and a better chance for full recovery.

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