Screening recommendations for people ages 40 to 49 in the Ontario Breast Screening Program

Guidance for Ontario Breast Screening Program sites

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Background

In fall 2024, the average risk Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) is expanding to include people ages 40 to 49. The OBSP has developed screening recommendations for this population based on a jurisdictional scan of breast cancer screening recommendations for people ages 40 to 49 in population-based organized screening programs in Canada, the United States, Australia and Sweden, a review of a recent modelling study, and input from an advisory panel. The screening recommendations are outlined below.

The OBSP encourages people ages 40 to 49 to make an informed decision about whether breast cancer screening is right for them based on their individual 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. To support informed decision-making, people may choose to have a breast cancer screening discussion with their health care provider, a Health811 navigator or a prevention specialist, located in certain communities.

Eligibility criteria

Women, Two-Spirit people, trans people and nonbinary people ages 40 to 74 are eligible for screening through the OBSP (average risk) if they:

- 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; and
- if transfeminine (i.e., assigned male at birth), have used feminizing hormones for at least 5 years in a row.

Screening interval

People ages 40 to 49 who choose to be screened for breast cancer should follow **the same screening interval as people ages 50 to 74**.

- Most people ages 40 to 49 should be screened **every two years**.
- People may be recalled **annually** (i.e., ongoing annual recall) if they meet one of the following criteria:
    - have a documented pathology of a concerning lesion (high-risk lesion);
    - have a personal history of ovarian cancer;
    - have two or more first-degree relatives assigned female at birth with breast cancer at any age;
    - have one first-degree relative assigned female at birth with breast cancer under the age of 50;
    - have one first-degree relative assigned female at birth with ovarian cancer at any age; or
    - have one relative assigned male at birth with breast cancer at any age.
- People may be recalled in **one year** if they meet one of the following criteria:
    - have a Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System (BI-RADS) breast (chest) density category D; or
    - the radiologist recommends that they be recalled in one year at the time of screening assessment.

Screening modality

In alignment with screening for people ages 50 to 74 in the OBSP, people ages 40 to 49 who choose to be screened for breast cancer may be screened with digital mammography. OBSP sites with digital breast tomosynthesis (DBT) capability may use it for breast cancer screening for OBSP participants. For more information on the use of DBT for breast cancer screening, please refer to the position statement on screening with DBT in the OBSP on the Cancer Screening SharePoint site.

Screening for pregnant or lactating people

Screening with mammography during pregnancy or while lactating is safe and effective.

- People who do not want to screen while pregnant can start screening three months postpartum.
- People can get screened while lactating, but should wait a minimum of three months after giving birth to start screening. This is because in the first few months of lactation, there are changes in the breast tissue which can result in a mammogram being less effective.
- Breast imaging for assessment or diagnosis should be managed as clinically appropriate throughout pregnancy and lactation.

Informed decision-making

To support informed decision-making, people may choose to have a breast cancer screening discussion with their health care provider, a Health811 navigator or a prevention specialist, located in certain communities.

Information about whether someone age 40 to 49 has had a breast cancer screening discussion before their first screening appointment should be captured by OBSP sites in the Integrated Client Management System (ICMS). Updates will be made to the ICMS at the time of launch to support these changes (see the OBSP 40 to 49 Expansion ICMS User Guide on the Cancer Screening SharePoint site for more details, which will be available at launch).

Need this information in an accessible format? 1-877-280-8538, TTY 1-800-855-0511, info@ontariohealth.ca.
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