



Information on access to breast screening for women with disabilities and wheelchair users

This information sheet is aimed at providing women who have a disability or use a wheelchair (or their carer) with information which:

1. Will help them decide if a mammogram is likely to be technically possible for them.
2. Will ensure they are given an appointment of appropriate length.
3. Will help them decide if their wheelchair is suitable.

Is Mammography Suitable?

Mammography is a procedure which is technically difficult requiring a high degree of cooperation between the radiographer and the woman.

Mammography typically requires the woman to stand up. Each woman has to be carefully positioned within the x-ray unit and must be able to hold the position for several seconds. This may not be possible for some patients with limited mobility in their upper torso or who are unable to support their upper bodies unaided. In order to optimise image quality and minimise radiation dose the breast must be compressed. This is uncomfortable and for some women may be painful.

Please read the following questions:

1. Do you use a wheelchair? If yes, can you sit erect, unaided in your wheelchair?
2. Are you able to lean forwards in your chair allowing your breast to be correctly positioned on the X-ray equipment?
3. Are you able to hold your arms to chest height?
4. Would you be able to maintain this position whilst remaining still, for several seconds?

Carer's Assessment of Woman

1. Is the woman able to cope in unfamiliar situations and environments,
2. Is the woman able to comprehend and cooperate with simple requests?
3. Can the woman support herself if she is a wheelchair user, as above?
4. Is the woman able to tolerate discomfort?

If the answer to any of the above questions is “**no**” then mammography may not be suitable and it is advisable to ring the screening unit on **028 72611363** for further clarification prior to attendance.

If mammography is not suitable the breast unit will provide an information leaflet, “Breast Awareness, Looking out for changes”.

Is Your Wheelchair Suitable?

Mammography typically requires the patient to stand up. Individuals who use wheelchairs may need to have the examination while remaining in their wheelchair. The mammography machine needs to be adjusted to the correct height for the wheelchair user and must safely accommodate the space of the wheelchair as the x-ray equipment may be inadvertently lowered on to the wheelchair possibly causing damage to it.

Most motorised wheelchairs are not suitable, particularly on a mobile screening unit.

Please read the following questions:

1. Can you attend in a non-motorised wheelchair?
2. Can the sides/armrests of your manual wheelchair be removed?
3. If you only have access to a motorised wheelchair or the sides/armrests of your manual wheelchair cannot be removed, can you transfer yourself to our mammography chair, with minimal support? (This can only be accommodated at the Breast Screening Unit, Ground Floor Nurses Home, Altnagelvin Area Hospital).

If the answer to any of the above questions is “**no**”, please ring the screening unit on **028 72611363** for further advice prior to attendance.

If a mammogram is not technically possible on this occasion you will be called again in 3 years' time, providing you remain within the screening age group (50 – 70 years old). If a you feel your circumstances have changed before the 3 years are up (improvement in your mobility or change in your wheelchair type) please ring the unit on **028 71611363** to request an appointment.

If mammography is not suitable the breast unit will provide an information leaflet on “Breast Awareness, Looking out for changes”.