

Preventive cancer screening

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Preventive Cancer Screening

The early cancer detection programme includes state-funded preventive screening for cervical, breast, prostate and colon (colorectal) cancers.

Letters of invitation are sent for cervical and breast cancer screening, while colon and prostate cancer screening is organised by general practitioners' practices. Regular cancer screening is very important because pre-cancerous changes do not cause complaints and have no symptoms. Preventive screening gives the opportunity to check the health state and, if a disease is detected, to start early treatment.

Cervical and breast cancer preventive screening

Invitation letters are sent randomly according to the Population Register data. An invitation for cervical cancer screening is sent to women aged 25 to 67 (every three years) and for breast cancer screening (mammography) to women aged 50 to 68 (every two years). Invitation letters are sent to the woman's registered address within about three months after her birthday.

Ages at which invitation letters are sent:

For cervical cancer screening – 25, 28, 31, 34, 37, 40, 43, 46, 49, 52, 55, 58, 61, 64, 67 years.

Breast cancer screening – 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68 years.

In 2022, women born in 1955, 1958, 1961, 1964, 1967, 1970, 1973, 1976, 1979, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997 will receive an invitation letter for cervical cancer screening. The invitation is valid for three years, but you are advised to have an examination within a few months of receiving the invitation. *(The invitation letter will not be sent to the women who underwent cervical cytology examination in the year preceding the date.)*

In 2022, women born in 1954, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1968, 1970 and 1972 will receive an invitation letter for breast cancer screening. The invitation is valid for two years, but you are advised to have an examination within a few months of receiving the invitation. *(The invitation letter will not be sent to the women who underwent mammography examination in the year preceding the date.)*

In which cases the invitation letter is not sent

There are cases where an invitation letter for cervical or breast cancer screening is not sent: if the cervical or mammography examination was carried out outside the state-organised preventive screening programme – within a year before the date of the invitation letter; if the woman has been diagnosed with certain diseases (e. g., malignant cervical tumour, malignant breast tumour); if the woman has undergone certain surgical procedures (e. g., cervix removal); if the woman has no declared place of residence in Latvia when the invitation letter is issued.

If a woman complains of her health state, she can see any gynaecologist who provides state-funded consultations without a referral. The patient fee for a consultation of a gynaecologist is 4.00 EUR. Mammography can be performed with a referral from a general practitioner or specialist with the patient payment 3.00 EUR.

The age groups for cancer screening are identified based on the recommendations of medical professional associations, as well as the European Commission's recommendations on the implementation of early detection programme organised and funded by the state for breast and cervical malignant tumours in the Member States. The European Commission recommends that each

Member State should introduce a cancer screening programme organised by the state, preferably with mammograms for women aged 50-69 and cervical cytologic examination for women from the age of 20 and to the age of 30 years.

Mobile mammograph

The mobile digital mammograph is a specially equipped bus that is available around Latvia, making it easier for people to get a high-quality mammogram near their place of residence. Mobile digital mammograph is provided by the medical facility Veselības centrs 4, Dziedniecība and Daugavpils Regional Hospital.

For information on the mobile mammograph schedule, please contact the National Health Service Customer Service Centre at nvd@nvd.gov.lv or by calling the information line 80001234. Telephone for international call [+37167045005](tel:+37167045005).

To make an appointment for breast cancer screening, you should contact your medical facility:

Veselības Centrs 4 – tel. [27866655](tel:27866655)

Dziedniecība – tel. [25431313](tel:25431313)

Daugavpils reģionālā slimnīca (Daugavpils Regional Hospital) – tel. [26458044](tel:26458044)

To find out the latest information about the mobile digital mammograph schedule, please contact Veselības Centrs 4, Dziedniecība and Daugavpils Regional Hospital!

List of medical facilities

This section of the website contains a list of medical facilities that offer state-funded cervical and breast cancer screening if you have received an invitation letter from the National Health Service.

For the list of medical facilities, please contact the National Health Service Customer Service Centre at nvd@nvd.gov.lv or call the information line 80001234. Telephone for international call [+37167045005](tel:+37167045005).

Preparing copies of invitation letters

From 2018, breast and cervical cancer screening can also be carried out without the invitation letter (e. g., if it has been lost or sent but not received). Information on the number and date of the invitation letter sent to the woman is available electronically in the medical facilities.

However, if you want to restore the invitation letter in paper form (if it is damaged, completely or partially lost), it is possible to make a copy. A copy of the invitation letter and screening test card can be obtained:

By contacting your general practitioner's practice.

By visiting a [territorial office](#) of the National Health Service (bring passport or identity card);

By contacting [medical facilities](#) providing screening services (bring passport or identity card).

Additional investigations after screening

The documents on follow-up investigations contain the information on the recommended actions after breast, cervical, colon (colorectal) and prostate cancer screening investigations, and the information on the medical facilities that can be contacted if a referral for screening investigations is received.

When contacting these medical facilities with a referral indicating the information on the need for an investigation after a preventive check-up, the services shall be provided no later than 30 days from the date of the referral to the medical facility.

Investigations can also be carried out at other medical facilities providing state-funded healthcare services. You can get an appointment and receive services in these medical facilities on general terms. For the list of medical facilities, please contact the National Health Service Customer Service Centre at nvd@nvd.gov.lv or call the information line 80001234. Telephone for international call [+37167045005](tel:+37167045005).

Questions and answers

Frequently asked questions about cervical cancer prevention

Why did I receive an invitation letter?

The invitation letter is sent as part of a state-organised and funded prevention programme. Every three years, women aged 25 to 70 (25, 28, 31, 34, 37, 40, 43, 46, 49, 52, 55, 58, 61, 64 and 67) receive an invitation letter for a state-funded cervical cancer screening.

The aim of such screening is to detect pre-cancerous diseases and cervical cancer early.

Why is this test required?

The first changes in the cervical mucosa are usually not yet visible during examination, and the woman does not show any signs of disease. If the changes where the abnormal cells are found are left untreated, cervical cancer can develop over time.

How often should this test be performed?

This test should be carried out every three years, except in women who have undergone a surgery to remove uterus. If only part of the uterus has been removed, but the cervix remains, this test is definitely necessary.

Is it an unpleasant or tiring procedure?

The material collection takes a few seconds and is painless. It is recommended that the patient chooses a gynaecologist or general practitioner she trusts for this investigation.

Where can the patient find out the test results?

The test results can be obtained from the medical facility where the preventive test was carried out.

What are the risk factors for cervical cancer?

Human papillomavirus (HPV). This virus has been proven to cause cervical cancer in most cases. It is contracted through sexual contact.

Smoking. Cigarettes contain substances that can damage cervical cells.

History of sex life. The risk of cervical cancer is increased if a woman started having sex at an early age and if she has multiple sexual partners.

Genetics. If a close family member (such as a mother or sister) has had cervical cancer, there is an increased risk of developing the disease.

Frequently asked questions about breast cancer prevention

What is early breast cancer detection programme?

The invitation letter is sent as part of a state-organised and funded prevention programme. Every two years, women aged 50 to 69 (50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66 and 68) are sent an invitation for a state-funded breast cancer screening.

The screening is done by mammography (X-rays of the breast). This is considered to be one of the most effective methods for early detection of breast cancer or other breast issues. Mammography is considered to be safe for health.

How often should this investigation be performed?

It is recommended to undergo this investigation every two years. Statistics show that breast cancer is most commonly diagnosed in women aged 50 and over.

Is mammography a painful procedure?

The mammography can cause discomfort and may be perceived as a slight pain by more sensitive women. During the investigation, the breast is squeezed to allow a better X-ray image to be taken. It takes a few minutes to take the X-ray image, and about 20 minutes for the whole appointment.

How to prepare for mammography?

A two-piece outfit – trousers or skirt and blouse – is most suitable for the investigation, as the woman will need to undress to the waist for the investigation. When you go for the investigation, you should bring the invitation letter (which is also the referral for the state-funded test) and the screening mammography card attached to the letter. You should also bring any previous results of breast investigations, if any.

How to detect breast cancer early?

Mammography can be used to diagnose tumours when they are still small and not noticeable. In the early stages, they are relatively easy to treat, so it is very important to detect cancer early. Studies around the world show that women who take part in an early detection programme have breast cancer detected at an earlier stage and live longer than those who do not.

Where can the patient find out the investigation results?

You should ask about the result of the mammography at the medical facility where the mammography was performed.

What can influence the development of breast cancer?

The main risk factors are the traits or habits that make a person more susceptible to disease than others. Several factors can be mentioned, but it is not clear how exactly each factor causes the risk of breast cancer.

Gender – women are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer than men.

Age – the older a woman gets, the higher her risk of breast cancer.

Family history – there are cases when women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer also have close relatives in the family, as well as women in previous generations who suffered from breast cancer.

Pregnancy – women who did not get pregnant by the age of 30 or have not had a pregnancy in their lifetime are at higher risk of breast cancer.

Alcohol – studies show that alcohol consumption slightly increases the risk of breast cancer.

Smoking – studies show that smoking and breast cancer are linked – the more years a woman smokes, the higher her risk of breast cancer.

Overweight – studies show that being overweight increases the risk of breast cancer, especially in post-menopausal women. This is explained by the fact that estrogen levels increase in fat cells, and high levels of estrogen increase the risk of breast cancer.

Preventive colon screening

From 1 January 2021, women and men aged 50 to 74 can have a state-funded colon cancer screening every two years. Preventive examination includes foecal occult blood test.

No invitation letter is sent for this test. For a preventive test, the patient should go to their general practitioner to receive a test kit and information on how to take the test at home.

As of 1 October 2019, colon cancer screening for occult blood is carried out by immunochemistry. This test method not only makes the test procedure much easier for the patient at home, but is also much more accurate than previously available tests.

Until now, the available test method required three consecutive bowel movements, but the new test for occult blood in faeces requires only one bowel movement. Moreover, people no longer have to comply with certain dietary restrictions before taking the new test.

Preventive prostate examination

The state-funded prostate cancer screening provides for specific blood tests every two years for two groups of people – all men aged 50–75 and men aged 45–50 with a family history of prostate cancer in a blood relative.

You should contact your general practitioner for a preventive check-up. Your physician will give you a referral for a blood sample and the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) will be measured in the laboratory.

If the results of the blood tests show an elevated PSA level, the general practitioner will make a referral for a consultation of urologist. This post-screening consultation will be available on a "green corridor" basis, or outside the general waiting list for appointments.

The appointment to the general practitioner for prostate prevention, the blood sample and the laboratory tests are fully covered by the state budget and are free of charge for the patient.

The test can be made in any laboratory providing state-funded tests. It is recommended to contact the laboratory that it is currently testing PSA before you go to check.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer of the urinary and genital system in men and the second most common malignant tumour in men over the age of 40. The risk of developing the disease doubles if a relative has had prostate cancer. But if you have two close relatives with prostate cancer, your risk increases by up to nine times.

Preventive investigations provide an opportunity to regularly monitor health and detect changes early, so treatment can be started as soon as possible if necessary to achieve better results.

<https://www.vmnvd.gov.lv/en/preventive-cancer-screening>