South East Scotland Breast Screening Centre

Ardmillan House
42 Ardmillan Terrace Edinburgh
EH11 2JL
Telephone: 0131 537 7410
Or to change appointments 0131 537 7400

Where are we?

The screening centre is located in the Gorgie/Dalry area of Edinburgh and is easily reached by bus from the city centre.

Lothian Region Transport Buses: 1, 3, 4, 21, 25, 33, 35, 44 and First Bus 4 and 44.

Haymarket Train Station is about 15 minutes walk from the centre.

Parking at the centre is very limited there are also a couple of disabled spaces available. There is also limited ‘on street’ parking available and parking meters near by.

About the Centre

Ardmillan House is a modern, purpose-built facility used only for breast screening. All the radiographers, clinicians, nurses, clerical and administrative staff are female. Some radiologists and surgeons are male.

The South East Scotland Breast Screening Centre is responsible for screening all eligible women living in:

- The City of Edinburgh and its close environs
- Mid, East and West Lothian
- A large area of South Fife
- Part of Forth Valley
- The Borders

Women from the City of Edinburgh are currently either screened at Ardmillan House or on a mobile mammography unit. Women out with the City are screened in mobile mammography units.

Why have I been invited?

All women in Scotland aged 50 – 70, are invited for a routine breast x-ray known as a mammogram once every 3 years.

Why is it important?

One in nine women in the United Kingdom will develop breast cancer. Mammographic screening however has been proven to significantly reduce breast cancer deaths by one third. Any woman can be affected. The risk of getting breast
cancer increases the older you get. We cannot prevent breast cancer but if we find breast changes at an early stage, treatment is often more successful. Screening can pick up these early changes of breast cancer before you are aware of them. Currently mammography is the best screening tool for the detection of early cancer. Although this type of breast screening is very accurate, a small number of cancers may not be picked up by this test.

What is breast screening?

Breast screening is an x-ray (mammogram) of the breast available to all women over the age of 50.

The first time a woman attends for screening two x-rays are taken of each breast. At future visits only one x-ray of each breast is usually taken. For the majority of women the initial screening mammogram is all that is required.

From April 2010 all women will receive 2 x-rays of each breast at each visit.

One in twenty women will be required to come back for further investigation. Only a small proportion of these women will be found to have a breast cancer.

How do I get an appointment?

Provided you are registered with a general practitioner and they have your correct postal address you will automatically receive a personal invitation for screening approximately 3 weeks prior to you allocated appointment date. If you live in the city, this will be when your practice is being screened. If you live out with the city this will be when your area is screened. You will receive your first screen sometime before your 53rd birthday, and thereafter every 3 years. If your appointment is unsuitable it can be changed by writing or telephoning the centre. Women over 70 years of age need to contact the unit 3 years from their last mammogram to organise a mutually convenient time.

- If you have breast implants on receipt of your invitation it is helpful if you could inform us so an appointment can be given for Ardmillan House.
- Women who use a wheelchair should advise the centre of this so that a suitable appointment time can be allocated. Women with an electric wheelchair, require to attend the main centre at Ardmillan house. Women with a self operated or assisted operated wheelchair can attend the mobile units.
- If you have any medical condition you feel we should be aware of before you are screened, please telephone or write to inform us.
- An interpreter service can be made available for women whose first language is not English, but we would require prior notification of this.
- We can also, given notice, arrange for an interpreter for deaf clients.
- Women in long stay institutions are eligible for screening, theses appointments are arranged locally.
- If you would like a partner or friend with you for company, please do bring them. Please note in order to respect the privacy of other women on the mobile unit, gentlemen are not encouraged on to the mobile unit. Also space
may be limited on a mobile unit and companions may be asked to wait in the car park.

Women under the age of 50 are not eligible for screening. However if you are under 50 years of age and are concerned as a result of a family history of breast cancer, or you have any symptoms, you should discuss this with your general practitioner who may refer you hospital for further investigations.

**What happens when I go for breast screening?**

**Ardmillan House**

After checking in at reception, you will be taken to a changing cubicle. You will be asked to remove your bra and to maintain modesty, cover yourself with one of your own tops. It might be easier to wear a separate top or blouse with a skirt or trousers. A specially trained female radiographer, who is responsible for taking the x-rays, will invite you into the x-ray room. Personal details, such as date of birth of and address are checked, any past or present breast problems will be noted. A visual examination of the skin area will be made and any moles or skin tags etc will be noted on your form. A full explanation of the procedure will be given before the x-rays are taken. If you want to ask any questions at any time during your visit, if there is anything worrying you, or you would like something explained again, please ask.

Two X-rays of both breasts will be taken at your first screening appointment then only one view on your following screening visits. From April 2010 you will receive two x-rays of both breasts at each visit. The radiographer will position you accurately using the compression plate to firmly hold your breast in place. Some women may find this uncomfortable, but it is a very important part of the examination as it stops movement and ensures good quality x-rays. This will only last a few seconds and will not harm your breasts. Your breasts may feel a bit sore for a short time after this. The radiographer will advise you of the timescale for results and any further follow up examinations. You can then dress and leave. The radiographer will advise you on possible discomfort following the x-ray and also if you become aware of any changes in your breast before you next screen to contact your General Practitioner immediately. The whole visit, including undressing and dressing, should only take about 20 minutes. The x-ray procedure itself takes only a few minutes. An information leaflet regarding the results is also given.

**Mobile mammography units**

When you arrive you will be met by a specially trained female radiographer who specialises in mammography (breast x-ray). Your personal details will be checked and you will be shown to a small cubicle and asked to remove your bra and cover yourself with one of your own tops. It might be easier to wear a separate top or blouse with a skirt or trousers.

The radiographer will invite you into the examination room where any past or present breast problems will be noted. A visual examination of the skin area of the breast will be made and any moles, skin tags etc. will be noted on your form.
A full explanation of the procedure will be given before the mammograms are taken. X-rays of both breasts will be taken. The radiographer will position you accurately using the compression plate to firmly hold you breast in place. Some women may find this uncomfortable, but it is a very important part of the examination as it stops movement and ensures good quality x-rays. This will only last a few seconds and will not harm your breasts. Your breasts may feel a bit sore for a short time after this.

Due to limited space on the mobiles your x-rays will not be processed at this time, they will be returned to the main centre. The radiographer will advise you of the timescale for results and any follow up examinations, and the possibility of being recalled if a film requires to be retaken and will advise you on possible discomfort following the x-ray. Should you become aware of any changes in your breasts before you next screen contact your General Practitioner immediately. The whole visit, including undressing and dressing should only take about 20 minutes. The x-ray procedure itself takes only a few minutes.

About one in twenty women will be called back for the second stage of screening, but most women find that all is well. There is no need to be worried at the thought of coming for a mammogram. The radiographers are highly skilled and will be sympathetic towards your needs. We appreciate this is a highly personal experience which varies from person to person.

**After your screen**

Two specially qualified film readers will read your mammograms. You will receive your results within three weeks, along with a leaflet containing information about your next screen and breast awareness. If you receive a normal result you will automatically be invited for another screen in three years time. For women who will be over 70 at their next screen they should contact the centre for an appointment. Please remember to tell your General Practitioner if you move house. This test does not prevent breast cancer but can often detect it if it is there already. It is important to have your breasts screened every three years. The risk of breast cancer increases as you get older.

**After your normal results**

Although this type of breast screening is very accurate, a small number of cancers may not be picked up by the test. During the next three years, until your next screen, it is best to keep a lookout for any changes to your breasts. These changes are important if they are new to you. If you do find a change it is important you see you G.P. quickly.

These changes could be:
- a lump or thickening in the breast
- a nipple turned in on itself, compared to the way it used to be
- puckering or dimpling of the breast skin
- changes in the outline shape of the breast
- odd feelings, discomfort or pain in one breast, particularly if new and persistent.
Some of these changes may be due to other things as well, for example the menopause. Although many changes are harmless it is important to check with your doctor as soon as possible after you notice them, as they may be a sign of cancer.

**What if I am recalled?**

Technical recall - If the x-rays of your breasts are not technically satisfactory you will be asked to return to have them repeated. This is a technical problem to do with the x-ray procedure, so please do not worry about this repeat.

Review Clinic - A small percentage of women (1 in 20 women screened) will be recalled to a Review Clinic for further tests. This can be considered to be the second part of the screening process. This visit usually lasts 1-2 hours. You will be seen by one of the clinic doctors, breast care nurse or breast care radiographer, who will explain to you why you have been recalled. They will ask you about any previous breast problems you may have had, take a brief medical history and examine your breasts. The radiologist present at the clinic will decide which further tests are appropriate for you. These tests may include further mammograms from different angles and/or an ultrasound scan of your breasts. Ultrasound scanning is similar to the test pregnant woman have is quite harmless. In some cases you may be offered a biopsy to determine the possible abnormality within the breast. In most cases the biopsy will be performed at the same clinic but you may require to return in the early afternoon or even on another day. The results of any tests you have will be discussed with you by the doctor before you leave the clinic. There is always a breast care nurse/breast care radiographer available in the clinic and she will be happy to discuss what is happening with you. You will be given their card and contact details before you leave also.

If after attending the review clinic your breasts are found to be normal you will be given a letter confirming this by the doctor. A second radiologist will then review the results of your tests. It is very unlikely that this radiologist will have a differing opinion, but if this happens you will be sent a letter informing you of the change in opinion and an appointment to return for further assessment. Occasionally films are reviewed by the second radiologist whilst you are still in clinic.

Eighty percent of women who attend a Review Clinic will be found to have nothing that requires further investigations or indeed treatment.

If there are any possible abnormalities in your breast you will be offered a core biopsy (removal of a small amount of breast tissue) at the clinic. The technique for obtaining specimens depends on whether the area of abnormality is best seen on ultrasound or x-ray. You will be given written information sheets about the biopsy and post biopsy care. The results of these will be available in 7-10 days.

If you are eligible to claim some benefits you may be able to claim travel expenses (not taxi fares) for this and subsequent visits. Please contact the centre to find out if you are eligible.
**Results clinic**

If the biopsy shows no evidence of breast cancer you will be reassured by the surgeon, and given information regarding your next screen in three years. If you have any questions you wish to discuss at this time you will be given opportunity to do so. Your own doctor will be sent a letter from the surgeon informing them of your results. The breast care nurse/breast care radiographer will be available if you wish to discuss any other issues.

If the results of your tests are inconclusive or show a non cancerous lesion, the surgeon will discuss with you the next possible course of action. This may involve repeating the test, or it may involve the abnormal area being removed by a small operation. You will be fully informed of the next step. The breast care nurse/radiographer will make the relevant arrangements and give you written information.

If after these tests you are diagnosed with breast cancer you will be able to discuss your fears and concerns with the surgeon and the breast care nurse/radiographer. This is a difficult time and you may find it hard to take in all the information you will be given, and you may find it helpful if you bring someone with you to the clinic. You will be given details of what will happen next and appointment times for hospital visits.; You will also be given the name and contact number of the breast care nurses at that hospital.& The breast care nurse/radiographer at the screening clinic are present to support you at this difficult time, and they will spend as much time with you, after the surgeon has left, as you require. A letter of referral is written by the screening breast care nurse/ radiographer and sent to the hospital creating a continuity of care.

**If you live in Edinburgh** your treatment will be given at the Edinburgh Breast Unit in the Western General Hospital.

**If you live outside Edinburgh**, it may be possible for you to be treated at your local hospital. However if the surgeon cannot feel the cancer you will require to come to the Edinburgh Breast Unit for treatment. If you find that travelling to and from Edinburgh is difficult, it can sometimes be possible for your GP to arrange transport.

We can reassure that whatever treatment is given you will receive the highest quality of care and support.

Reviewer: Lesley Smart  
Review Date: January 2012