

PEI Breast Screening Program

Breast Density Notification

The Government of Prince Edward Island announced in 2019 that women in the province will be advised directly of their breast density. As a result, the PEI Breast Screening Program is expanding the practice of sharing a patient's breast density with the primary care provider and will now provide that information directly to the patient as well.

What does it mean to have dense breasts?

Breasts are made up of fatty and fibroglandular tissue. The fibroglandular tissue is comprised of milk glands, ducts and supportive tissue. When there is more fibroglandular tissue than fatty tissue it means that you have dense breasts.

Is it normal to have dense breasts?

Having dense breasts is normal and it is usually more common in younger women. As we age the dense breast tissue often becomes replaced by fatty tissue.

Why is it important to know if I have dense breasts?

On the mammogram, fibroglandular tissue appears white. Some breast issues also appear white on the mammogram. This can mean that some cancers may be difficult to detect in the dense breast tissue.

How is breast density determined?

A mammogram is needed to measure the breast density. You cannot tell if you have dense breasts by touch.

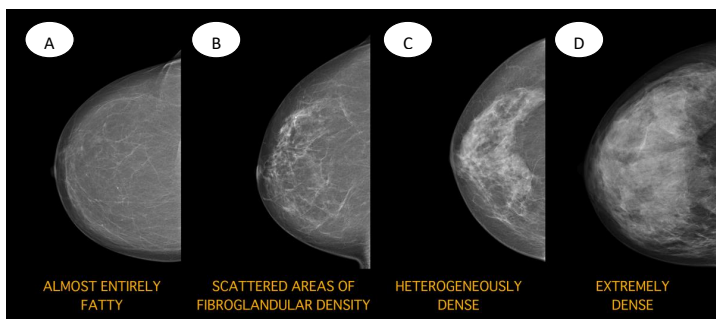


Health PEI

The breast density is reported using the American College of Radiology Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System standard (BI-RADS). This BI-RADS system uses four categories for breast density.

There are 4 categories of breast density:

- Category A:** Almost entirely fatty means that the breasts are almost entirely made up of fatty tissue
- Category B:** Scattered areas of fibroglandular density means that there is some dense tissue in the breasts but the majority of the breast is fatty
- Category C:** Heterogeneously dense means that more of the breast is made up of dense tissue
- Category D:** Extremely dense means that nearly all the breast tissue is dense



Abdoell, M., Tsurunda, K., Lightfoot, C.B., Brown, P., Raza, S.A., Schaller, G., Caines, J., Payne, J.I. & Iles, S. (March 2016). The BI-RADS 5th edition density scale and breast cancer risk: a case-control study. Poster session presented at the 2016 European Congress of Radiology, Vienna, Austria.

What do I do if I have dense breasts?

The PEI Breast Screening Program recommends women with the highest category breast density have a mammogram yearly. Become informed, talk to your primary care provider, and know your risk factors for breast cancer.

Mammography is still the standard method for breast cancer screening

For more information about the PEI Breast Screening Program please contact us.

**Call 902-438-4570 or
toll free at 1-888-592-9888**