

Breast Screening...

Just a quick update this week, following on from last week, of what is open and what isn't...

BREAST SCREENING, that vital tool that is offered to all women aged 50-71 to look for early detection of breast cancer; (a cancer which affects approximately 1 in 8 women in the UK) is back!!

It was put on hold, like many other things, when covid-19 struck, and they are now starting to screen again. There is clearly a backlog, and after creating a safe recovery plan, their doors are indeed opening.

Under normal circumstances, all women, registered with a GP in the UK, are automatically sent an invitation to start screening around their 50th birthday (they call people in batches, allocated to GP surgeries, so you may be called before or after you friend who is registered down the road but is 6 months older than you...!).

You are then recalled every 3 years until your 71st birthday. After that, the routine invitations stop, but women are still entitled, and encouraged, to request a screening via the screening service if they wish to have one after this age.

Women in a higher risk category (perhaps due to family history) may be eligible for earlier screening.

In between screening, the service is still there and GPs can refer you to the fast track service for assessment if you develop any symptoms in between. So come and see us if you are worried!

How will they catch up?

Their plan is to try and access all the higher risk patients as a priority, (which they have continued to screen anyway) and then move onto all the women who were invited in March 2020 but did not get to their appointment, and work from there.

Currently the trial of younger women, between age 47 and 49 and older women 71 to 73 (AGE X trial) has been paused, and until the backlog has been cleared, they are unable to offer the enhanced service to over 71s, but they hope this will resume as soon as possible.

It is a shame they have had to do this, as clearly the aim is to promote and increase uptake of screening, but Public Health England have felt it a necessary temporary step to catch up. This of course makes it all the more important that any women who is concerned about a lump, or a change in their breast of any description should be assessed by a clinician, and we can refer to the urgent service that is still working away.

With breast cancer, it has been shown that screening is effective at picking up early changes, and the earlier you are diagnosed, the better the outcome.

Screening saves about 1 life for every 200 people screened, that's 1300 people saved every year in the UK alone.

So... to cut a long story short, if you are worried about your breast, PLEASE make an appointment to come and see a clinician, we will always need to examine you, so although you will have a triage call first, it is one of the things we absolutely cannot do over the phone!!

Hopefully anyone out there who was overdue a mammogram will get their invitation letter dropping through their door soon.

Please attend; it might just save your life.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-cancer-screening/why-its-offered/>

Local service 01244 365135 or 365136