

Letterkenny General Hospital
Satellite Cancer Centre of
Galway University Hospitals

Visiting the
**Symptomatic
Breast Clinic**

A Guide for Patients

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This booklet was prepared by the National Cancer Control Programme in consultation with health care professionals and people who have attended a symptomatic breast service.

Patient Information

Your doctor has referred you to the Breast Clinic - the full name is the Symptomatic Breast Clinic. This may be because you have a breast lump, or because of another symptom such as discomfort or discharge, or a strong family history of breast disease.

This booklet tells you what to expect when you attend one of the eight Symptomatic Breast Clinics in Ireland, which have been put in place to provide you with the best possible care.

You will be examined by a doctor at the clinic. The doctor may decide to refer you for some tests. This may involve spending time in the Radiology or X-ray department. You might have a mammogram or breast ultrasound, or both. You may also require a test which will involve having a small needle put into the breast.

THE MAJORITY OF BREAST LUMPS ARE NOT CANCER.

The majority of patients who attend a breast clinic only require one visit.

How long will I be at the clinic?

We aim to see all patients promptly and carry out all your tests in one day. Sometimes, there may be unavoidable delays, particularly if you require a number of tests. It is possible that you may need to spend most of the day at the hospital and you should make allowances for this. It is important that you arrive for your appointment on time and not too early as this could result in a longer stay for you at the clinic.

What should I bring with me?

It is **important** to note that if you have had any previous mammograms or x-rays taken of your breast, please arrange to bring these with you. You will need to contact the hospital or clinic where you had these tests carried out and arrange to get copies of the files to bring with you. If you have difficulty in getting your x-ray film, please contact the secretary in the Breast Clinic in advance of your appointment.

It may be advisable to bring along something to read, as patients can sometimes spend a long time at the clinic if they are going for more than one test.

What should I wear?

Wear comfortable clothes with a separate top and bottom as you will need to take your top and your bra off for a physical examination and tests. Avoid wearing talcum powder, deodorant or perfume as they may interfere with some tests.

Can I bring a relative or friend to the clinic?

Yes. Everyone in the clinic is aware that coming to a breast clinic can be a worrying time. You are welcome to bring a relative or friend.

We would recommend that you don't bring children with you to the clinic, for your own comfort and that of your child. However, if this isn't possible, we suggest you bring a friend or relative to mind them while you are being seen.

There may be areas where accompanying persons are not permitted.

If you are returning to the clinic for results we would recommend you bring a relative or friend.

What happens when I arrive at the Breast Clinic?

When you check in you will be asked by the receptionist to confirm your personal and contact details. You will meet a doctor, who is a member of the breast team, who will ask you details about your symptoms and will carry out an examination.

After examination, the doctor may decide you need some tests, such as a **mammogram, ultrasound or biopsy**. If possible these tests will be done on the same day as your clinic appointment. A Breast Care Nurse is available at the clinic to provide information and support.

What tests might I have?

Depending on your age and symptoms you may have a mammogram or a breast ultrasound scan. Some people will have both tests performed.

After a mammogram or ultrasound the doctor may decide to take a sample from the lump, either by a core biopsy or fine needle aspiration. Explanations of these tests are provided later in this booklet.

What is triple assessment?

Triple assessment means you will have the following:-

- Be examined by a breast surgeon
- Have a mammogram and/or ultrasound
- Have a core biopsy or fine needle aspiration

It should be noted that not all patients who attend the Symptomatic Breast Clinic require triple assessment.

Mammogram

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. The X-ray is a picture of the inside of your body. It is produced by exposure to a controlled source of X-rays and the image is recorded on special photographic film or on a computer.

Are there any risks in having a mammogram?

A mammogram is a safe procedure. There are some risks involved with X-rays. All risks are relative, and the benefits of the examination have to be taken into account.

It is **essential** that you tell the Radiographer if

- You have breast implants
- You are pregnant
- You think you might be pregnant

Who will you see when you have a mammogram?

A radiographer will carry out this test.

Are you required to make any special preparations for a mammogram?

Wear comfortable clothes with a separate top and bottom. Avoid wearing talcum powder, deodorant or perfume.

What does the mammogram involve?

You will be asked to undress to the waist and put on a gown. Once you are in the X-ray room, each breast will, in turn, be positioned against part of an X-ray machine. Each breast needs to be compressed between the X-ray machine and a flat X-ray plate. A certain amount of pressure is felt briefly. This pressure is important to get good results.

A mammogram is not generally painful but it can be uncomfortable. Tenderness in the breasts can sometimes make the procedure more uncomfortable. Two X-ray views are taken of each breast from different angles.

The radiographer will go behind a screen, but at all times you are in view of the radiographer, and can be heard, should you have a problem. You need to keep still. You may hear a slight whirring from the X-ray machine. Each mammogram exposure takes only a few seconds. You will be in the x-ray room for approximately 20 minutes.

Ultrasound

What is a breast ultrasound?

An ultrasound scan uses sound waves to build up a picture of the inside of the breast.

Are there any risks in having a breast ultrasound?

No, there are no known risks and it is considered to be very safe. It is a commonly used way of getting a picture of the breast.

Who will you see when you have a breast ultrasound?

You will be cared for by a radiologist or a sonographer depending upon the type of scan you are having.

Are you required to make any special preparations before a breast ultrasound examination?

No.

What should I wear?

Wear comfortable clothes that have a separate top and bottom as you will need to take your top and bra off for the test to be carried out.

What does the ultrasound scan involve?

You will be asked to undress to the waist and lie down on a couch. The radiologist or sonographer will ask you about your breast symptoms. Once you are lying down your breasts will be examined to check the position of any lumps. A gel will be applied to your breasts and a small hand held sensor will be moved over the skin to view the breast from different angles. The lights in the room will be dimmed, so that the pictures on the monitor can be seen more clearly.

How long will the breast ultrasound take?

The scan takes approximately 5-10 minutes.

Will the breast ultrasound hurt?

No.

Core Biopsy or Fine Needle Aspiration

If you have a lump the doctor may do one of two tests to get a sample of the tissue/cells from the lump.

- i) A **core biopsy** is when a needle is inserted into your breast lump to get a sample of the lump. Local anaesthetic is used prior to the insertion of the needle to numb the area and reduce pain.
- ii) A **fine needle aspiration (FNA)** is when some fluid or cells are removed from a lump through a smaller needle.

Ultrasound or mammography equipment may be used to assist the doctor in obtaining the tissue/cells.

The cells or tissue are sent to the laboratory and examined under a microscope. The results are not available on the day of your clinic visit and you will be asked to return to the clinic at a later date.

Will the biopsy hurt?

The biopsy can be sore. However local anaesthetic is given and the procedure only takes a few minutes. Occasionally there may be a little bleeding or bruising.

Results

When are the results available?

You will usually get the results of your mammogram or ultrasound on the day of your visit. However the results of a core biopsy or fine needle aspiration are not available on your first visit and you will be given an appointment to attend for the results.

Staff will process your tests as quickly as possible. Everyone in the clinic is aware that this can be a worrying and stressful time.

If you are returning to the clinic for results we would recommend you bring a relative or friend.

If You Have A Query

If you have any queries regarding your visit or these tests please contact your breast care nurse team at your symptomatic breast clinic or your GP.

If You Cannot Attend For Your Appointment

Please contact the breast clinic secretary if you are unable to attend the clinic. Another person can then be offered your appointment. The secretary will offer you an alternative appointment if you wish.

Details of how to contact your breast clinic secretary can be found at the end of this booklet.

Travel2Care Scheme

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) understands that some women referred for investigation, treatment and care to Symptomatic Breast Clinic may need help towards meeting some of the travel costs associated with attending the service.

The NCCP funds a scheme entitled Travel2Care Scheme which is run by the Irish Cancer Society, the national cancer care charity.

The Travel2Care scheme is specifically aimed at women who have a genuine financial difficulty in meeting the costs of travelling to the Breast Clinic. It will refund the costs of public transport or an equal amount towards the cost of private transport.

To avail of assistance through this scheme, you must submit an application directly to the Irish Cancer Society. An application form is available from:-

Travel2Care

Irish Cancer Society, Dublin 4.

Tel: 01-2316619

Email: travel2care@irishcancer.ie



Hospital/Clinic Details

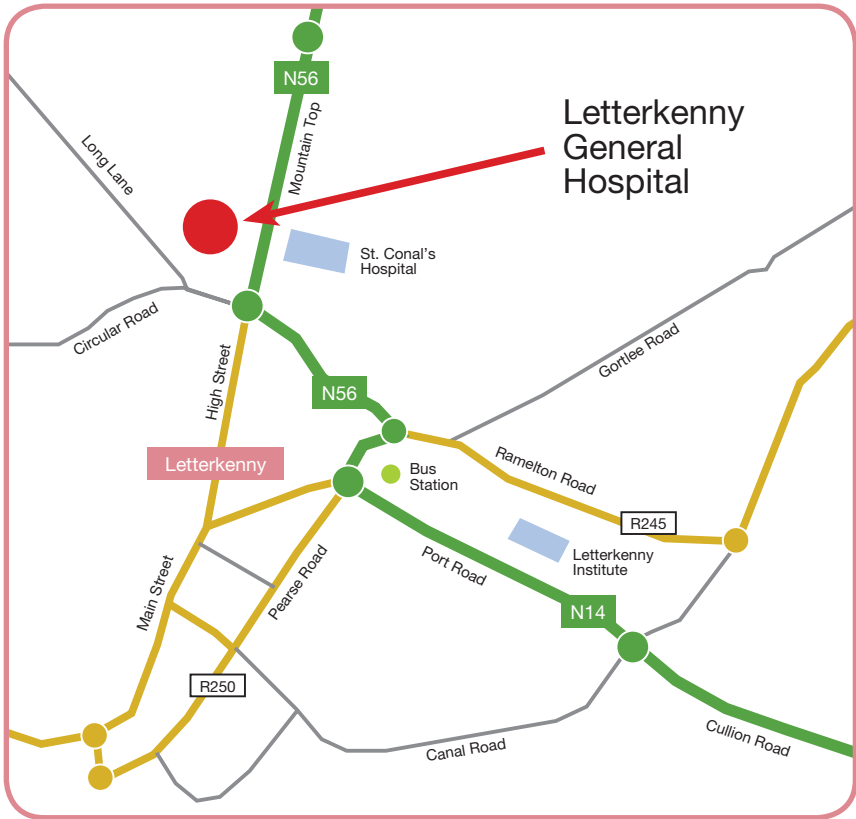
1 About the Letterkenny General Hospital Symptomatic Breast Cancer Service

Letterkenny General Hospital has a well established Breast Cancer Service. It has been one of the pioneers of tele-conference, multi-disciplinary breast cancer meetings since the early part of 2000. It's breast team are committed to the delivery of quality breast care.

Mr. Kevin Moran was the inaugural Breast Surgeon in 1996. In July 2007 Mr. Michael Sugrue was appointed as permanent Consultant in Breast Cancer Care. In 2007 the Unit was selected as a satellite cancer centre attached to the Galway University Hospital's Breast Network. Approximately 1500 New patients are seen annually. The Breast and New Breast Clinic was officially opened in December 2008 by An Tánaiste Mary Coughlan and is now called Breast Centre North West.

2 Location of Breast Centre North West

The Breast Centre North West is located to the rear of Letterkenny General Hospital. The entrance to the Unit is adjacent to the Accident and Emergency Department on the main Kilmacrennan road.



3 How to get here?

From Sligo/Derry Road direction:

At Station Roundabout take the 3rd exit onto Ramelton Road - R229 (signposted Dunfanaghy, Kilmacrenan)

At Oatfield roundabout take the 1st exit onto De Valera Road - R229 (signposted Dunfanaghy, Kilmacrenan N56)

At Hospital roundabout take the 3rd exit onto Mountain Top - N56 (signposted Dunfanaghy, Kilmacrenan)

Breast Unit is located first entrance on left after the main A&E entrance.

4 Car Parking

Car Parking is available on the hospital campus. There is a charge for car parking.

5 Hospital Facilities

Shop

A shop is located on the ground floor in the main reception. A variety of items are sold including newspapers, magazines and refreshments.

Monday - Friday	9.30am	-	8.00pm
Sat, Sun and Bank Holidays	11.00am	-	7.00pm

Coffee Dock

Monday – Friday	9.00am	-	6.00pm
Closed weekends and public holidays			

Dining room:

Breakfast	8.30am	-	11.15am
Lunch	12.00pm	-	2.30pm
Tea	4.00pm	-	5.45pm

6 Key Contacts

Appointment Enquires

If you have a query in relation to your clinic appointment please contact our breast appointments secretary Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm. You may leave a voice message outside of these hours and your call will be returned.

Breast Clinic Appointments	(074) 91 23737
Breast Care Secretary	(074) 91 88823
Breast Care Nurse	(074) 91 88843
Breast Care Data Manager	(074) 91 23735

7 Your Comments on your experience of our service

“Your Service, Your Say.”

We hope that you have a positive and supportive experience while attending our service. We welcome your comments, suggestions and complaints in relation to the service. You may give us your comments by:

- Completing a comments card in the breast unit.
- Writing to our Consumer Services Manager or telephone: **(074) 91 23503**
- Completing a “**Your Service, Your Say**” leaflet
- E-mail your comments to **yoursay@hse.ie**
- Visit **www.hse.ie**

We wish you well

your service
your say

National Cancer Control Programme

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