



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

21 September 2020

Deputy Violet-Anne Wynne
violet-anne.wynne@oireachtas.ie

Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ23411/20: To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting BreastCheck screening services in the mid-west by county in tabular form

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above query.

The population-based screening programme BreastCheck has been paused on public health advice since 16 March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pause in community testing was put in place to protect patients and staff by complying with social distancing guidelines.

BreastCheck is in the final stages of planning necessary to resume screening on a phased basis in September/October. This includes:

- a structured approach to scheduling appointments
- a new process, which includes the use of new technology, for notifying women of their appointments during COVID-19
- priority invites issued to those waiting longest
- reduction in capacity for screening due to social distancing and potential staff limitations due to COVID-19
- supporting symptomatic breast services in their host hospitals, providing care, diagnostics, treatment and surgery for patients referred to the symptomatic service. This work is increasing capacity for screening participants to access treatment pathways when screening resumes.

In addressing your question, we took mid-west to mean counties Clare, Limerick and Tipperary.

Based on our target screening interval, BreastCheck aims to screen a person between 24 months and 27 months of their previous mammogram. Based on these targets, there would be a total of 7,059 people within these three counties who are currently awaiting screening at 27 months.

The following table shows the number of people awaiting breast screening at 27 months in the three mid-west counties.

County	Number waiting at 27 months
Clare	3,965
Limerick	1,266
Tipperary	1,828

Screening is a population health measure for people who are presumed healthy and do not have symptoms. The aim of a population screening programme is to reduce the incidence of disease in a population. Screening is not a diagnostic tool and no screening test is completely accurate.

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☎ 353 1 865 9300 ✉ info@screeningservice.ie www.screeningservice.ie



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All screening programmes are limited by the sensitivity of the test which is the ability to detect those with the disease in a population (true positives). Screening programmes are likewise limited by the specificity of the test which is the ability to detect those who are free of the disease (true negatives). Therefore, a negative test result is not a guarantee that a person is clear of the condition, or that they won't develop the condition between screening appointments.

The NSS continues to encourage all people who are between screening appointments, or waiting for rescheduled appointments, to be aware of, and act upon, any symptoms associated with the conditions for which they are being screened. We ask that those people contact their GP, who will arrange appropriate follow-up care.

For other queries patients can call the Freephone information line on 1800 45 45 55, email info@screeningservice.ie or contact your clinic directly.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Fiona Murphy
Chief Executive
National Screening Service

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