



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

05 March 2021

Deputy Mattie McGrath
mattie.mcgrath@oireachtas.ie

Our Ref: EG/Communications

PQ11870/21: To ask the Minister for Health the date the breast screening programme will resume.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

BreastCheck was paused between March and end of October 2020 in order to protect participants and staff by complying with social distancing guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. During this time, BreastCheck provided support to the symptomatic breast cancer service, assessing and treating women who were at high risk of breast cancer and whose hospital appointments has been delayed due to Covid-19. This meant that urgent patients who had symptoms were seen quicker, with the aim of improving the outcome of any diagnosis.

Although breast screening resumed in late October last year, in early 2021, many women who were due routine screening had their invitation delayed due to unprecedented levels of virus in the community. We are pleased to say that routine breast screening is again operating nationwide, with invites being sent out to eligible women for screening appointments dated from 08 March 2021. The focus of the resumption of routine screening is to achieve a maximum invitation rate that is compatible with a safe and controlled follow-up assessment and our treatment capacity within the health service.

- Invitation letters will be sent first to those who had their appointments cancelled in January 2021
- Invitations for all other women due routine screening will follow
- Screening will resume in our BreastCheck units on a countrywide basis
- Women in the assessment phase of breast screening will continue to be seen

BreastCheck is operating at reduced capacity due to social distancing requirements and potential staff limitations due to COVID-19. We are monitoring the situation and will make decisions in line with best Public Health advice. We are asking all participants, including new entrants, to check their telephone details on the register as our new text management system is in place to maximise appointment uptake.

If women cannot make their appointment, we are asking them to let us know, so that we can rearrange their appointment and offer the slot to someone else.

Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend a screening appointment until they are sure that they are clear of the illness. They should visit [HSE.ie](https://www.hse.ie) for guidelines and advice.

We continue to emphasise to our participants that BreastCheck is a screening service for well women within the population age range (50-69 years) and is not a symptomatic service. If a person has any concerns or symptoms concerning their breasts, we strongly encourage them to contact or attend their GP to ensure that they are given the appropriate advice/referral regarding a symptomatic clinic for breast symptoms, which are still in operation.

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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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BreastCheck
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Cúc
The National Breast Screening Programme



CervicalCheck
AN CLÁR NAISIÚNTA SCAETHÁSTÁLA CEIRBEACS
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



BowelScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Putóige
The National Bowel Screening Programme



Diabetic
RetinaScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Retiní do Dhiabéiteigh
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme