



22 November 2022

Deputy Pádraig O'Sullivan TD  
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Our Ref: GM/Communications

**PQ55264.22: To ask the Minister for Health the length of waiting lists for cancer screening services, by county and hospital in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy O'Sullivan,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question. I also intend to answer here your question about cancer screening services that was contained in PQ55265.22. I understand the remainder of that question has been answered by the National Cancer Control Programme.

Ireland's three national cancer screening programmes – BreastCheck, CervicalCheck and BowelScreen – invite people to take part when they become eligible for screening. Invitations are issued at various intervals thereafter depending on the programme. Screening programmes do not keep waiting lists.

### **BreastCheck**

BreastCheck invites eligible women aged from 50 to 69 years, for breast screening on an area-by-area basis every two years. We call this process a screening 'round'. Our mobile units move around over the course of each round depending on the size of the population that is eligible for screening in each area. The BreastCheck mobile stays in location until all eligible women who are in the catchment area for that mobile unit have been invited.

The first invitation will depend on when screening is available in a woman's area. This is normally within two years of her 50th birthday.

Along with many public services, BreastCheck was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme was paused for several months in 2020 and 2021, and because of this, it is taking longer to get through the current screening round.

BreastCheck is back to nearly normal numbers attending for screening daily, despite extra COVID-19 measures still being in place. We aim to be back to two-yearly screens by autumn 2023. This is dependent on meeting the challenge of staff recruitment and retention.

### **CervicalCheck**

CervicalCheck offers free primary HPV cervical screening every three years to women and people with a cervix aged 25 to 29; and every five years to those aged 30 to 65 years. The programme is up to date with invites for screening.

### **BowelScreen**

Bowel cancer screening is available to all people aged 60 to 69 years living in Ireland. The BowelScreen test is conducted in the person's home, with a testing kit that arrives in the post, and is returned in the post. The programme was impacted significantly by the changing COVID-19 environment and the cyber-attack, which means screening invitations are currently delayed by up to a year.

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An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála  
National Screening Service

### Screening updates

We provide updates on breast, cervical and bowel screening on [www.breastcheck.ie](http://www.breastcheck.ie), [www.cervicalcheck.ie](http://www.cervicalcheck.ie), and [www.bowelscreen.ie](http://www.bowelscreen.ie) respectively. People can also contact us on [info@breastcheck.ie](mailto:info@breastcheck.ie), [info@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:info@cervicalcheck.ie), and [info@bowelscreen.ie](mailto:info@bowelscreen.ie); or Freephone 1800 45 45 55.

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

Yours sincerely,

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Fiona Murphy  
Chief Executive  
National Screening Service

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