

Mid Western Regional Hospital  
Regional Cancer Centre **Mid West**

Visiting the  
**Symptomatic  
Breast Clinic**

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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.

This booklet will be reviewed as new evidence emerges. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that it is accurate, we do not accept responsibility for errors or omissions.

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# 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.**

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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# 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.

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## 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.



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# 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.

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## 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.

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# 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.

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# 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.

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## 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.

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# 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](mailto:travel2care@irishcancer.ie)**



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# Hospital/Clinic Details

## 1 About the Mid West Symptomatic Breast Unit.

The Mid West Symptomatic Breast Clinic was established in 1998. The service has over 6,500 attendances per year (*attendances for 2010 were 6,760*) and diagnoses approximately 200 new breast cancers per year. In 2005 the unit had its first consultant surgeon with a special interest in breast disease and reconstruction appointed. In 2009 a second consultant surgeon with a special interest in breast disease and reconstruction was appointed.

In November 2007, the unit was designated as one of the eight specialist symptomatic breast units in Ireland.

## 2 Location of the Mid Western Hospital

The Mid Western Regional Hospital, Dooradoyle, Limerick is located approximately 3 miles south of Limerick city centre.



### Directions to Mid-Western Regional Hospital

#### From Ennis / Galway N18

- At Coonagh Roundabout take a right
- At Clonmakin roundabout go straight through
- Shannon Bridge roundabout take a right
- Cement Factory roundabout take a left
- Quinn's Cross roundabout go straight through
- Raheen roundabout take a left
- Next Roundabout is Regional Hospital roundabout

#### From Cork / Kerry

- Sign for Dooradoyle (R926), Garryowen RFC, Old Crescent RFC - this is Dooradoyle Interchange
- Take this turn off and follow signs for Regional Hospital

#### From Tipperary / Waterford

- Approaching Limerick – on single carriageway you will see sign for Cork/Tralee
- Take this slip road and you are now on dual carriageway.
- Continue to a Roundabout
- Take a left and take first interchange signposted Dooradoyle (R926)
- Follow signs for Regional Hospital

#### From Dublin

- At Newport Roundabout take a left onto Dual Carriageway (Sign for Cork/Tralee)
- Continue to Roundabout – take a left and take first interchange Dooradoyle (R926)
- Follow signs for Regional Hospital



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## 3 Public Transport

### Bus Service

Bus 304A runs from Colbert Station, Parnell Street Bus and Train station every 10 – 15 minutes to the Mid-Western Regional Hospital. The bus stop is located to the left of Colbert Station.

Bus 304 runs from O’Connell Street to the Mid Western Regional Hospital every 10 minutes.

The bus service runs Monday – Saturday from 7.00 a.m. and Sunday from 12.00 noon.

The Tralee and Killarney Expressway will pick up and set down passengers at the hospital bus stop. A more extensive range of buses provides services to the Colbert Station, Parnell St. For further details of bus times Bus Eireann may be contacted at Colbert Station

**Telephone no (061) 313 333.**

### Train Service

Irish Rail provide regular train links from Thurles, Ennis, Limerick Junction, Cork and Galway to Colbert Station, Parnell St., Limerick. Colbert Station is approximately 2 miles from the hospital. See “Bus Service” for local bus details. For further details of train times Irish Rail Colbert Station may be contacted

**Telephone no (061) 315 555.**

### Taxis

Taxis are also available at Colbert Station.

## 4 Car Parking

Car Parking is available on the hospital campus. The public car park is located at the front of the hospital and is clearly signposted. There is a charge for car parking.

## 5 Hospital Facilities

### Shop

A shop is located at the ground floor in the main reception area with a smaller outlet near the out patient area. A variety of items are sold including newspapers, magazines, refreshments, sandwiches, fruit, sweets and toiletries.

Opening Hours:

Main Hall	Monday - Friday	8.00am - 8.30pm
	Saturday - Sunday	9.00am - 8.30pm
Outpatients Entrance	Monday - Thursday	9.00am - 5.00pm
	Friday	9.00am - 4.00pm

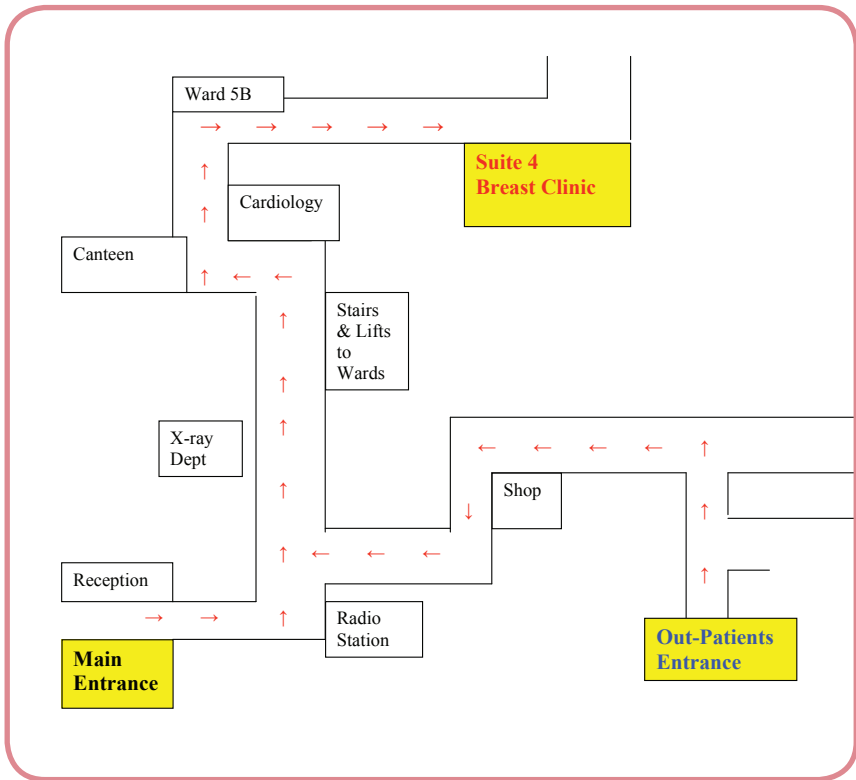
### Canteen

The hospital canteen is open to the public at specific times throughout the day.

Breakfast		7.30am - 11.20am
Lunch	Monday - Saturday	12.00pm - 2.30pm
	Sundays & Bank Holidays	12.00pm - 1.40pm
Afternoon Tea & Supper		3.30pm - 6.00pm

## 6 Location of the Symptomatic Breast Clinic

The Symptomatic Breast Clinics are held in Suite 4 which is attached to the main hospital building.



## 7 Key Contacts

### Queries regarding appointments

If you have a query in relation to your clinic appointment please contact our breast secretarial staff from Monday - Friday 9.30am - 5.00pm. You can leave a voice message outside of these hours and your call will be returned when the office re-opens.

**Telephone no (061) 482832 and (061) 482895**

### If you would like to speak to a breast care nurse

Breast care nurses have specialist training and experience in breast care and are available to answer your queries.

A breast care nurse is present at all the breast clinics and available to answer your questions. If you have questions before or after your clinic visit, please feel free to telephone one of our breast care nurses at **Tel: (061) 482 915**.

If you get a voicemail when you telephone, please leave a message and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

### Other contacts:

Breast Clinic Secretaries	<b>Tel: (061) 482 832 and (061) 482895</b>
Breast Care Nurses	<b>Tel: (061) 482915</b>
Breast Services Co-ordinator	<b>Tel: (061) 485145</b>
Social Worker	<b>Tel: (061) 482896</b>
Cancer Information and Support Centre	<b>Tel: (061) 485163</b>

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## 8 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;

- Talking to a member of our staff or our Breast Care Co-ordinator. **Telephone no (061) 485 145.**
- Completing a “**Your Service, Your Say**” leaflet. These are available at the Breast Clinic and in a number of locations around the hospital.
- 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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**NCCP-COM-015 Rev 015 Version 2**

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