

# Breast Screening Practices in Canada

Comparing the  
provinces and  
territories on  
5 key practices.



breast screening



**DENSE BREASTS**  
C A N A D A

## **Dense Breasts Canada compared breast screening programs across the country.**

**Does the province's screening program:**

- 1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?
- 2) Offer annual mammograms for women ages 40-49?
- 3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?
- 4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?
- 5) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms after age 74?

The provincial comparison below highlights the differences between the provinces and the gaps in access to optimal breast screening. If provinces are in the process of making a change, that is indicated as well.

Where you live should not matter when it comes to optimal breast screening, but it does.



# Prince Edward Island

**Does Prince Edward Island:**

- 1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?  
**Yes**
- 2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?  
**Yes**
- 3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?  
**Yes**
- 4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?  
**Yes**
- 5) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms after age 74?  
**No**

**Rating: 4/5**

**Kudos:**

- ✓ Women can self-refer, starting at 40.
- ✓ Women, ages 40-49, can screen annually.
- ✓ The breast density category, A, B, C or D, is mailed to women in their result letter.
- ✓ Women with Category D density are offered annual mammograms.

**Changes still needed:**

- Self-referral for screening after age 74.
- Better access to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts.

**Advocacy update:** In 2019, the government committed to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts. DBC and opposition MLAs continue to advocate for implementation. DBC is meeting again with the health minister in January 2023.

Help advocate for change in PEI by sending the health minister this [letter](#)

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
4/5





## Nova Scotia

### Does Nova Scotia:

1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?

**Yes**

2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?

**Yes**

3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?

**Yes**

4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?

**No \***

5) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms after age 74?

**Yes**

**Rating: 4/5 but potential for 5/5**

### Kudos:

- ✓ Women can self-refer, starting at 40.
- ✓ Women, ages 40-49 can screen annually.
- ✓ The breast density category is mailed to women in their result letter.
- ✓ Women can continue to self-refer for screening after age 74.

### Changes still needed:

- \*Annual mammograms for women with Category D density (in consultation phase for policy approval).
- Access to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts.

**Advocacy update:** Advocacy continues for access to screening ultrasound.

Help advocate for change in Nova Scotia by sending the health minister this [letter](#)

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
4/5





# Yukon Territory

## Does Yukon Territory:

1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?

Yes

2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?

Yes

3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?

No

4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?

Yes

5) Offer self-referral for a mammogram after age 74?

Yes

Rating: 4/5

## Kudos:

- ✓ Women can self-refer, starting at 40.
- ✓ Women, ages 40-49, can screen annually.
- ✓ Women with Category D density are offered annual mammograms.
- ✓ Women can continue to self-refer for screening after age 74.

## Changes still needed:

- All women need to be directly informed of their breast density.
- Better access to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts.

**Advocacy update:** In December 2022, Yukon’s Health Minister informed DBC that they are using software to assess the breast density category and radiologists are including the category in their reports to the health care provider. This is not sufficient. We continue to advocate that the information also be provided directly to women in the result letter mailed to them.

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
4/5





## British Columbia

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### Does British Columbia:

1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?

**Yes**

2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?

**No**

3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?

**Yes**

4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?

**No**

5) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms after age 74?

**Yes**

**Rating: 3/5**

### Kudos:

- ✓ Women can self-refer for a mammogram, starting at age 40.
- ✓ The breast density category is mailed to women in their result letter.
- ✓ Women can continue to self-refer for screening after age 74.
- ✓ Women with Category C or D density can access screening ultrasound with a requisition.

### Changes still needed:

- Annual screening ages 40-49; women can only self-refer every 22 months.
- Annual mammograms for women with Category D density.

**Advocacy update:** Advocacy continues for increased access to screening ultrasound with MLA and caucus meetings scheduled for early 2023.

Help advocate for change in British Columbia by sending your health minister this [letter](#).

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
3/5





# Alberta

## Does Alberta:

1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?

No

2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?

Yes

3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?

Yes

4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?

No

5) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms after age 74?

No

Rating: 2/5

## Kudos:

- ✓ Women can self-refer after their first screen ages 40-45 or self-refer after age 45.
- ✓ Women can screen annually 40-49.
- ✓ The breast density category is mailed to women in their result letter.
- ✓ Women with Category C or D density can access screening ultrasound with a requisition.

## Changes still needed:

- Self-referral for screening at 40
- Self-referral for screening after age 74.
- Annual mammograms for women with Category D density.

**Advocacy Update:** DBC met with the Alberta Screening Program to discuss their new guideline where the screening age was lowered to 45. Advocacy continues for self-referral at age 40.

Help advocate for change in Alberta by sending your health minister this [letter](#)

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
2/5





# Saskatchewan

## Does Saskatchewan:

- 1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?  
No
- 2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?  
No
- 3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?  
No \*
- 4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?  
Yes
- 5) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms after age 74?  
Yes

Rating: 2/5 but potential for 3/5 in 2023

### Kudos:

- ✓ Women with Category D density are offered annual mammograms.
- ✓ Women can continue to self-refer for screening after age 74.

### Changes still needed:

- Self-referral for screening at 40 (Committed for 2024/2025).
- \*All women need to be directly informed of their breast density. Only women in Category D are currently informed. Software updates are under way and until completed, women can access the density category in MySaskHealthRecord or by asking their provider.
- Better access to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts.

**Advocacy update:** In 2022, DBC advocated for quicker implementation of density notification and screening at 40. DBC looks forward to the software upgrade allowing the density category to be included in all result letters.

Help advocate for change in Saskatchewan by sending your health minister this [letter](#)

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
2/5





# Manitoba

## Does Manitoba:

1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?

No

2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?

No

3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?

Yes

4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?

No

5) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms after age 74?

Yes

Rating: 2/5

## Kudos:

- ✓ The breast density category is mailed to women in their results letter.
- ✓ Women can continue to self-refer after 74.

## Changes still needed:

- Self-referral for screening, starting at 40
- Annual mammograms for women with Category D density.
- Better access to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts.

**Advocacy update:** Much change is needed in Manitoba and DBC will be pursuing meetings with MLAs in 2023.

Help advocate for change in Manitoba by sending your health minister this [letter](#)

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
2/5





# Newfoundland and Labrador

## Does Newfoundland and Labrador:

1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?

No

2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?

No

3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?

No \*

4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?

Yes

5) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms after age 74?

Yes

Rating: 2/5 but potential for 3/5 in 2023

### Kudos:

- ✓ Women with Category D density are offered annual mammograms.
- ✓ Women can continue to self-refer for screening after age 74.

### Changes still needed:

- Self-referral for screening at 40.
- All women need to be directly informed of their breast density: only women in Category D are currently informed. Implementation is underway to inform all women of density in 2023.
- Better access to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts.

**Advocacy update:** Correspondence and advocacy is ongoing.

Help advocate for change in Newfoundland and Labrador by sending your health minister this [letter](#)

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
2/5





# Northwest Territories

## Does Northwest Territories:

1) Offer self-referral for a mammogram starting at 40?

No

2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?

No

3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?

No

4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?

Yes

5) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms after age 74?

Yes

Rating: 2/5

### Kudos:

- ✓ Women need a requisition for the first screen in the 40s, but can self-refer thereafter.
- ✓ Women with Category D density are offered annual mammograms.
- ✓ Women can continue to self-refer for screening after age 74.

### Changes still needed:

- Self-referral for screening, starting at 40
- All women need to be directly informed of their breast density: only women in Category D are currently informed.
- Better access to ultrasound for women with dense breasts.

**Advocacy update:** Much change is needed and DBC is awaiting a response from the Health Minister's office.

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
2/5





## Ontario

### Does Ontario:

1) Offer self-referral for a mammogram starting at 40?

No

2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?

No

3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?

No\*

4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?

Yes

5) Offer self-referral for a mammogram after age 74?

No

Rating: 1/5 but potential for 2/5 in 2023

### Kudos:

- ✓ Women with Category D density are offered annual mammograms.

### Changes still needed:

- Self-referral for screening, starting at 40
- \*All women need to be directly informed of their breast density: only women in Category D are currently informed but a commitment to tell all women has been given for Summer 2023
- Self-referral for screening after age 74
- Better access to ultrasound for women with dense breasts

**Advocacy update:** DBC met with the Deputy Health Minister and leadership of Ontario Health to advocate for density notification and self-referral at 40. We continue to meet with MPPs and Ontario Health. We await a report on supplemental screening for women with dense breasts.

Help advocate for change in Ontario by sending your health minister this [letter](#)

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
1/5





# New Brunswick

## Does New Brunswick:

1) Offer self-referral for a mammogram starting at 40?

No

2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?

No

3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?

Yes

4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?

No

5) Offer self-referral for a mammogram after age 74?

No

Rating: 1/5

## Kudos:

- ✓ The breast density category is mailed to women in their results letter.

## Changes still needed:

- Self-referral for screening, starting at 40
- Annual mammograms for women with Category D density.
- Self-referral for screening after age 74
- Better access to ultrasound for women with dense breasts

**Advocacy update:** There is communication with the screening program and political representatives in New Brunswick, advocating for screening at 40 and ultrasound for women with dense breasts.

Help advocate for change in New Brunswick by sending your health minister this [letter](#)

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
1/5





## Quebec

### Does Quebec:

1) Offer self-referral for a mammogram starting at 40?

No

2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?

No

3) Tell all women their breast density after a screening mammogram?

No

4) Offer annual mammograms for women with Category D density?

No

5) Offer self-referral for a mammogram after age 74?

No

Rating: 0/5

Kudos: None

### Still needed:

- Self-referral for screening, starting at 40
- All women need to be directly informed of their breast density
- Annual mammograms for women with Category D density.
- Self-referral for screening after age 69
- Better access to ultrasound for women with dense breasts

**Advocacy update:** There are continuous advocacy efforts with the screening program and political representatives in Quebec with regards to screening at 40 and density notification.

Help advocate for change in Quebec by sending your health minister this [letter](#)

Check out our [self-advocacy toolkit](#) to get the screening you need.

Rating:  
0/5



# Provincial Comparison Chart 2023

| You can self-refer at age 40   | You can self-refer annually in 40s | All women are told their breast density | Only women in category D are told | Women with category D offered annual mammogram | You can self-refer after age 74 |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| BC                             | NS                                 | BC                                      | **ON                              | ON   | BC                              |
| PEI                            | PEI                                | MB                                      | **SK                              | SK   | NS                              |
| NS                             | YT                                 | AB                                      | **NL                              | NL   | MB                              |
| YT                             | *AB                                | NB                                      | NWT                               | NWT  | SK                              |
| *AB, NWT<br>after first screen |                                    | NS                                      | YT                                | YT   | NL                              |
| ***SK                          |                                    | PEI                                     |                                   | PEI  | NWT                             |
|                                |                                    |   |                                   |  | YT                              |

\*Alberta self-referral at 45  
\*\* Committed to density notification  
\*\*\*Committed to screening at 40 in 2024/2025

 Dense Breasts Canada 2023

For more information on current, relevant evidence on breast screening in Canada, Visit [densebreastscanada.ca](https://densebreastscanada.ca) and [mybreastscreening.ca](https://mybreastscreening.ca)



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