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**About us**

Dense Breasts Canada (DBC) is a nonprofit made up of breast cancer survivors and healthcare professionals. DBC Is dedicated to:1. raising awareness about the risks of dense breasts and 2. advocating for breast density notification.

**What are dense breasts?**

All breasts contain glands and fat. A breast with more glands and little fat is considered a dense breast. Dense breasts are very common; about 40% of women over age 40 have dense breasts. There are four categories of breast density and breasts with over 50% dense tissue are considered dense.

**Why it is important for women to know if they have dense breasts**

1. For women with dense breasts, mammograms are less accurate. Dense breast tissue shows up as white on a mammogram and so does cancer, creating a masking effect. The accuracy of mammography declines as density increases; up to 50% of the cancers present in the densest breasts may be missed.
2. Dense breasts are an independent risk factor for breast cancer. The higher the density, the higher the risk of cancer. Cancer is 4-6 times more likely in women with the densest breasts than in women with the lowest density.

Cancer in women with dense breasts is often discovered by the woman herself when she feels a lump in between her scheduled mammograms. It is often in a later stage. As a result, women with dense breasts are more likely to need mastectomy and chemotherapy. Their prognosis is impacted by a late or missed diagnosis.

**Patient access to breast density information in Manitoba**

Most women in MB do not know if they have dense breasts because they have not been informed.

**Women with over 75% breast density (10% of women)** Women in this highest category of density are notified. (Policy to notify women with over 75% dense tissue began June. 2019).

**\Women with 50- 75% density (40% of women)** Dense breasts are those with more than 50% dense tissue, not just those with over 75% dense tissue. Women in this category are not notified and put at risk because important information about their cancer risk is withheld from them.

**What women can do if they know they have dense breasts**

They can have the chance to protect themselves from harm by:

* being vigilant practicing breast self-examination between screenings
* mitigating lifestyle risk factors (exercise, weight, alcohol use, etc.)
* understanding that a normal mammogram doesn’t mean cancer is not present
* considering supplementary screening, such as ultrasound

**What the Government of Manitoba can do**

The government can easily provide ALL women with their density information by adding a simple line in the mammogram results letter with the density category and associated risks. A key part of early detection is ensuring women learn their breast density so that they can have a discussion with their doctor about their risk factors. The Government of Manitoba can save women’s lives by providing ALL women with lifesaving information.