

You have dense breasts and are denied a screening ultrasound.

So, you've had a mammogram and learned you have dense breasts. Since dense tissue can mask cancer on a mammogram, you would like additional screening. You need a requisition for a screening ultrasound, but your health care provider will not provide one.

We've designed a script to help you advocate for yourself and overcome any potential barriers while having a conversation with your health care provider.

If your health care provider says: The Canadian breast cancer screening guidelines do not recommend screening ultrasounds for women with dense breasts.

You can respond: I understand that is the recommendation but since there is an increased cancer risk with dense breasts and since mammograms are not as effective because of the masking effect, I would like to schedule an ultrasound to be safe.

Additional information: Since 1995, ultrasound has been proven in multiple studies to detect additional cancerous tumours missed by mammogram.[\[1\]](#)

If your health care provider says: You don't have a family history or any other risk factors and so you don't need to worry about additional screening.

You can respond: Dense breasts are actually a more prevalent risk factor than family history.[\[2\]](#) Most women diagnosed with breast cancer have no risk factors they are aware of. I would like to go ahead and schedule an ultrasound.

**If it applies to you, you can remind your health care provider that Black, Asian and Hispanic women are at an increased risk for breast cancer at a younger age than white women.[\[3\]](#)

If your health care provider says: Having a screening ultrasound can result in a "false positive", meaning you will be recalled for more testing. These tests can create anxiety for you.

You can respond: I understand that there's a chance that more tests will be needed if something is picked up, but I'm not very worried about being recalled. I'd rather be safe than sorry. I understand any anxiety I experience will be short-lived if I have a normal result. And if the result is not normal, I'd prefer to have cancer found at an early stage, rather than a later stage. I would like to go ahead and schedule an ultrasound.

[\[1\] https://acsjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/1097-0142\(19950815\)76:4%3C626::AID-CNCR2820760413%3E3.0.CO;2-Z](https://acsjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/1097-0142(19950815)76:4%3C626::AID-CNCR2820760413%3E3.0.CO;2-Z)

[\[2\] https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamaoncology/article-abstract/2599991](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamaoncology/article-abstract/2599991)

[\[3\] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5875337/?tool=pmcentrez&report=abstract](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5875337/?tool=pmcentrez&report=abstract)

