

Breast Screening Practices in Canada

Comparing the
Provinces and
Territories on
7 Key Practices

March 2025

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DENSE BREASTS CANADA



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?
- 6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?
- 7) Offer high-risk program?

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.



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?
Yes
- 5) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms after age 74?
Yes
- 6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?
No
- 7) Offer high-risk program?
Yes

Rating: 6/7

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.
- ✓ Annual mammograms for women with Category D density.
- ✓ Have a high-risk program

Changes still needed:

- Access to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts.

Advocacy update: Advocacy continues for access to screening ultrasound.

Rating:
6/7



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?

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?

No

7) Offer high risk program?

No

Rating: 5/7

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:

- Better access to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts.
- High-risk program

Rating:
5/7



Newfoundland and Labrador

Does Newfoundland and Labrador:

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?

Yes

6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?

No

7) Offer high risk program?

No

Rating: 5/7

Kudos:

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

Changes still needed:

- Better access to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts.
- Date needed for implementation of density notification.
- High-risk program

Rating:
5/7



Ontario

Does Ontario:

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

Yes

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

No

6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?

Yes

7) Offer high risk program?

Yes

Rating: 5/7

Kudos:

- ✓ Self-referral for screening, starting at 40.
- ✓ Women with Category D density can also choose between MRI every two years and ultrasound every year, depending on capacity.

Changes still needed:

- Self-referral for screening after age 74

Rating:
5/7



British Columbia

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

6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?

Yes

7) Offer high risk program?

No

Rating: 4/7

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.
- High-risk program

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

Rating:
4/7



Northwest Territories

Does Northwest Territories:

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

No, but women can begin to self-refer at 45. Women can also self-refer 40-44 after their first requisition.

2) Offer annual mammograms, ages 40-49?

Yes, but only ages 40-44.

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

Yes

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

Yes. Screening ultrasound is also offered for Category D.

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

No

6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?

Yes

7) Offer high risk program?

No

Rating: 4/7

Kudos:

- ✓ Women need a requisition for the first screen in the 40s, but can self-refer thereafter.
- ✓ The breast density category is mailed in the results letter.
- ✓ Women with Category D density are offered annual mammograms and have access to ultrasound.

Changes still needed:

- Self-referral for screening, starting at 40 instead of 45.
- High-risk program

**Rating:
4/7**



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

6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?

No

7) Offer high-risk program?

No

Rating: 4/7

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.
- High-risk program

Advocacy update: In 2019, the government committed to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts. DBC and opposition MLAs continue to advocate for implementation.

Rating:
4/7



Saskatchewan

Does Saskatchewan:

- 1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?
No. Lowered the age to 47, January 1, 2025. Then to age 44 July, 2025. Then to age 40 January 2026.
- 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?
Yes
- 5) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms after age 74?
Yes
- 6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?
Yes
- 7) Offer high risk program?
No

Rating: 4/7

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.
- Better access to screening ultrasound for women with dense breasts.
- High-risk program

Rating:
4/7



Alberta

Does Alberta:

- 1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?
No, but women can begin to self-refer at 45. Women can also self-refer 40-44 after their first requisition.
- 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
- 6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?
Yes
- 7) Offer high risk program?
***No, working on it.**

Rating: 3/7

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.
- High-risk program*

Advocacy Update: Advocacy continues for self-referral at age 40.

Rating:
3/7



Manitoba

Does Manitoba:

- 1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?
No. Lowering the age to 45 end of 2025. Then to 40, timeline TBD.
- 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
- 6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?
No
- 7) Offer high risk program?
No

Rating: 2/7

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.
- High-risk program

Advocacy update: Much change is needed in Manitoba and Dense Breasts Canada is actively advocating.

Rating:
2/7



New Brunswick

Does New Brunswick:

1) Offer self-referral for a mammogram starting at 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) Offer self-referral for a mammogram after age 74?

No

6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?

No

7) Offer high risk program?

No

Rating: 2/7

Kudos:

- ✓ The breast density category is mailed to women in their results letter.
- ✓ Women can self-refer for a mammogram, starting at age 40

Changes still needed:

- Annual mammograms for women with Category D density.
- Self-referral for screening after age 74
- Better access to ultrasound for women with dense breasts
- High-risk program

Advocacy update: DBC is advocating for supplemental screening.

Rating:
2/7



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?

Yes

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

No

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

No

6) Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts?

No

7) Offer high risk program?

No

Rating: 1/7

Kudos: None

Still needed:

- Self-referral for screening, starting at 40
- All women need to be directly informed of their breast density in the mail. Currently, the information is in the online health portal.
- Annual mammograms for women with Category D density.
- Self-referral for screening after age 69
- Better access to ultrasound for women with dense breasts
- High-risk program

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.

Rating:
1/7

Breast Screening Practices in Canada

Province/Territory	At age 40 can self-refer for a mammogram	Age 40 to 49 self-referral in progress	Breast density category mailed to all women having a screening mammogram	Annual mammogram for category D density	After age 74 can self-refer (others need req.)	Offer additional screening to women with dense breasts	Offer a high-risk program
BC	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes	
NS	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
PEI	Yes		Yes	Yes			
YT	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		
AB	After 1st screen or age 45		Yes			Yes	In Progress
MB		Age 45 Dec. 2025	Yes		Yes		
NB	Yes		Yes				
SK	Age 47	Age 47 Jan. 2025	Online Portal	Yes	Yes	Yes	
ON	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
NL	Yes		Online Portal	Yes	Yes		
QC		Under Review	Online Portal				
NWT	After 1st screen or age 45		Yes	Yes		Yes	

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Check out our self-advocacy guide and for more information on breast screening in Canada, visit densebreastscanada.ca and mybreastscreening.ca

