

# Breast Density Notification in Nova Scotia

## WHAT IS BREAST DENSITY?

Breasts are made up of “non-dense breast tissue” (also called fatty tissue) and “dense breast tissue”, which includes milk glands, ducts and supportive tissue. Some people think that because their breasts are firm, they are dense but, breast density is not related to breast size or firmness.

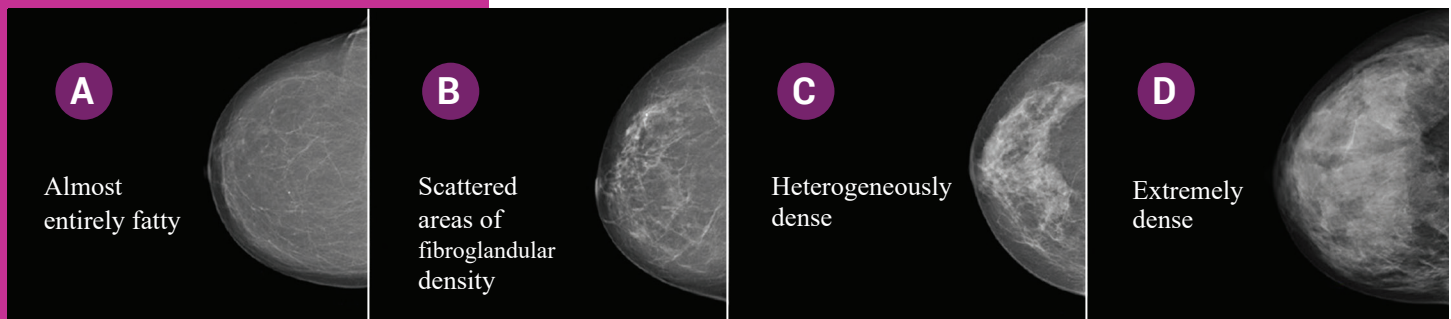
## WHO IS LIKELY TO HAVE DENSE BREASTS?

Younger women tend to have denser breasts than older women because younger women have higher levels of the hormone estrogen. As we grow older, breasts often become more fatty and less dense.

## HOW IS BREAST DENSITY DETERMINED AND REPORTED?

A screening mammogram is needed to measure breast density. Breast density cannot be felt by a physical examination.

Breast density is reported according to the American College of Radiology Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System (BI-RADS) standard.



There are four  
categories of breast  
density, shown above  
as they appear on a  
mammogram.

**Category A:** Almost entirely fatty means that the breasts are almost entirely made up of fatty tissue.

**Category B:** Scattered areas of fibroglandular density means that there is some dense tissue in the breasts, but the majority of the breast tissue is fatty.

**Category C:** Heterogeneously dense means that more of the breast is made up of dense tissue.

**Category D:** Extremely dense means that nearly all of the breast tissue is dense.



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For more information about the Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program, please contact us.

Call (902) 473-3960 or  
toll free 1-800-565-0548.

[breastscreening.nshealth.ca](http://breastscreening.nshealth.ca)

## **WHY IS BREAST DENSITY IMPORTANT?**

On a screening mammogram, cancers may be hidden by dense breast tissue because both appear white.

People with more breast density have a greater chance of developing breast cancer. However, even having the highest breast density does not mean that you will develop breast cancer. There are other risk factors for breast cancer. Being a woman is the biggest risk factor for breast cancer. Increasing age is also a risk factor.

## **IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR SCREENING MAMMOGRAMS**

Many people who do not have dense breasts can develop breast cancer. It is important to get a screening mammogram regularly, as this is the only test proven to find cancer when it is small, allowing more treatment options and better chance of recovery.

## **KNOW YOUR BREASTS**

You should know what is normal for your breasts. You should contact your primary care provider right away if you notice any unusual changes in your breasts like a new lump, nipple discharge, or changes to the skin such as redness or dimpling, even if you have recently had a normal mammogram.

## **Changes in your Breast Density**

Breast Density can change from year to year. Density tends to go down as you age but may also be affected by the following:

- taking hormone replacements
- weight gain or loss
- menopausal status

