

Breast Screening Practices in Canada

Comparing the
Provinces and
Territories on
7 Key Practices

January 2026

dbc
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



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



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



Saskatchewan

Does Saskatchewan:

- 1) Allow women to self-refer for mammograms starting at age 40?
No. Currently the age to self-refer is 43 and in June 2026 it will drop to 40.
- 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



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



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. Currently the age to self-refer is 45. Then in December 2026 it will drop to 40.
- 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 | Hereditary High Risk Program |
| 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 | Age 40 Dec. 2026 | Yes | | Yes | | |
| NB | Yes | | Yes | | | | |
| SK | Age 43 | Age 40 June 2026 | Online Portal | Yes | Yes | Yes | |
| ON | Yes | | Yes | Yes | | Yes | Yes |
| NL | Yes | | Online Portal | Yes | Yes | | |
| QC | | Under Review | Online Portal | | | Cat. D with Family History | |
| 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

