

CANCER PATHWAYS  
Information for patients

IS-0465E

# Procedures and tests for suspected breast cancer

You have been referred for assessment by the specialist health service because there is a suspicion of a cancer diagnosis. Specialised procedures and tests will determine whether or not you have cancer. If it is shown that you do have cancer, your treatment will be planned in consultation with you.

You have been referred for assessment via the Cancer pathway for breast cancer. The Cancer pathways are intended to give patients and relatives predictability and security and are national standardised pathways which are discipline-based. The aim is to speed up your assessment and the start of treatment and minimise waiting times, in order to make the assessment period as predictable and stress-free as possible for you.

The Cancer pathways define the number of calendar days that each part of the assessment should take. These are called pathway timescales. Pathway timescales are targets rather than absolute requirements. For some patients, there will be medical reasons why the Cancer pathway should be longer or shorter than the timescales stated in the national Cancer pathway.

- **Procedures and tests for suspected cancer**

The aim of the assessment and the procedures and tests you will undergo is to determine whether or not you have cancer.

You may also be referred for assessment for a different illness. If the investigations indicate that you have cancer, you will be given information on possible treatments and what will happen next.

You will be told about the procedures and tests that are relevant for you and when they will be carried out.

All hospitals that investigate and treat cancer patients have their own cancer pathway coordinators, who will make the necessary preparations for your pathway by booking appointments for your procedures and tests. You can contact the cancer pathway coordinator if you have any questions concerning practical matters relating to your assessment, appointments, etc. The cancer pathway coordinator is often a nurse, but he or she may also have a different professional background.

Medical questions will be answered by a doctor.

- **Assessment phases**

The assessment will normally be completed within 14 calendar days. For medical reasons, it may sometimes take longer.

The assessment period is the period from receipt of the referral by the hospital until the assessment has been completed and it has either been confirmed that you do not have cancer, or you have been given a diagnosis and a decision has been taken regarding your treatment. The timescales are defined in the Cancer pathway for breast cancer.

The various phases of the assessment and the treatment	Comments	Recommended within	
<p><b>Phase 1: This is the period from receipt of your referral by the hospital until your first appointment for procedures and tests in the pathway</b></p>	<p>The cancer pathway coordinator will book the necessary appointments for your procedures and tests.</p>	<p><b>7 calendar days</b></p>	
<p><b>Phase 2: This is the period from your first appointment for your procedures and tests in the pathway until your assessment is completed</b></p>	<p>During this period, you will undergo procedures and tests to determine whether or not you have cancer.</p> <p>Most patients who are assessed for breast cancer undergo what is known as the multidisciplinary triple diagnostic method. This consists of three types of assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical assessment of the breast</li> <li>• Mammography and/or ultrasound scan</li> <li>• Needle biopsy, where a needle is inserted into the tumour in order to take cell samples. This is done to determine whether or not the tumour is malignant.</li> </ul> <p>Other procedures and tests may be necessary. You will be told about these as you attend your appointments. Once the results of the assessments are available, it will normally be possible to say whether or not you have cancer. A decision concerning diagnosis will then be taken. If you do not have cancer, the Cancer pathway will be concluded.</p>	<p><b>7 calendar days</b></p>	
<p><b>Phase 3: This is the period from you being diagnosed as having cancer and completing all the tests and procedures in the pathway until the start of your treatment</b></p>	<p>If you have cancer, your treatment will now be planned. Any decision concerning your treatment will be taken in consultation with you, normally based on an assessment by a multidisciplinary team.</p> <p>For patients with breast cancer, one or more of the following possible treatments may be appropriate: surgical treatment, chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy. Surgical treatment is the most common type of treatment given. Some patients will also have chemotherapy or radiotherapy.</p>	<p><b>Surgical treatment</b></p>	<p><b>13 calendar days</b></p>
		<p><b>Medicinal treatment</b></p>	<p><b>10 calendar days</b></p>

Patients with breast cancer will normally start treatment within 24 to 27 calendar days from the date on which the hospital receives the referral. For medical reasons, it can sometimes take longer. Your doctor will tell you what to expect and give you more information on your Cancer pathway.

For more information, visit [helsenorge.no/brystkreft](https://helsenorge.no/brystkreft). The hospital that assesses you will also have information on its website.

## Notes