

# Breast Care Clinic

## Fast-track service



Groene Hart Ziekenhuis   
*Open voor iedereen*

You have been referred to the Breast Care Clinic for breast examination. The Breast Care Clinic is a fast-track service for women who require assessment following suspicious findings on a mammogram carried out during the National Screening Programme or a complaint concerning one or both breasts. In one comfortable location, women have rapid access to digital mammography, ultrasound, and biopsy allowing for expedited clinical decisions and shorter time for treatment, if required. The support of dedicated healthcare providers who help to coordinate assessment procedures is an added benefit. The goal is to provide the patient with a definitive diagnosis and treatment plan as quickly as possible.

A call to the Breast Care Clinic puts the coordinated care system into motion - evaluation, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up. These comprehensive breast care components, which may require three or more appointments elsewhere, are usually accomplished in one visit to the Clinic within one day of your initial call.

This leaflet gives information on what to expect at this Outpatient Clinic and on the tests that may be carried out.

## **General**

The news of an abnormal mammogram or a complaint concerning a breast is a stressful and challenging time in a woman's life. As a result, we have created a programme that quickly provides answers and coordinates care for benign and malignant breast diseases. The Clinic Units expert breast cancer specialists are in one location to care for patients with newly diagnosed breast cancer.

The breast care team consists (initially) of a surgeon, a radiologist, a pathologist and nurse practitioners. A nurse practitioner is a master educated nurse, a specialist in breast cancer. She is the case manager for every breast cancer patient. The surgeon is in charge of the whole treatment.

The breast care team evaluates all aspects of care, creating custom treatment options particularly designed to offer the patient the best approach for their unique medical and personal needs. Our experience offers additional treatment options for patients whose care can be enhanced through participation in cancer clinical trials and research.

To carry out the various tests the surgeon, the nurse practitioner, the radiologist and the pathologist work closely together. This usually makes it possible to give some certainty about the nature of complaint(s) within the one day. You should therefore realize that a visit to the Breast Care Clinic could take up to half of the day. Depending on the results, extra tests may then be carried out. We try to keep this period of uncertainty as short as possible

## **The visit to the Breast Care Clinic**

### **Where to go**

On the day of your appointment you should report to the Breast Care Clinic on the ground floor. You should give the staff the letter from the family doctor/G.P. and/or the letter from the National Screening Programme.

### **Anamnesis and physical examination**

You will first have a talk with the nurse practitioner from the surgical team. Among other things, she will ask you about the nature of your complaints and about your medical history. This is called the anamnesis. If you are on anticoagulant drugs, or could possibly be pregnant, it is important to tell staff this during your first visit to the Breast Care Clinic.

The nurse practitioner is your advisor from discovery to recovery. You will meet her each time you visit the Clinic. She'll answer your questions and address any concerns you might have about your mammogram and breast health. Should breast cancer be diagnosed, she is your adviser and liaison with the members of your care team.

During the physical examination, your breasts, neck and armpits are examined for possible abnormalities. Afterwards, decisions are taken concerning which tests still need to be done to ascertain the nature of the abnormalities.

We try to plan the tests in succession to each other as much as possible, but you may have to wait between procedures.

Some of the following tests may be needed.

### **Mammogram**

This procedure nearly always takes place: even if you have been referred following a visit to the National Screening Programme. The photos from the National Screening Programme serve as comparison material. A mammography from another hospital will be reassessed.

The digital mammography takes place in the Radiology department. You should go to the reception desk of that department on the ground floor. For this procedure you need to undress from the waist upwards in the private changing room provided.

During this procedure X-rays are used. These rays are neither visible nor tangible. The amount of X-radiation used is so small, that you really do not need to worry about it.

The x-rays can cause damage to the unborn child; therefore it is most important that you tell us, if there is the slightest possibility that you are pregnant. Instead of a mammogram, an ultrasound scan will be made.

Usually the technician makes two X-rays of each breast: one in vertical and one in a horizontal position. To give as clear a picture as possible, the breast is pressed flat between two synthetic plates. This pressing of the breast can be painful. If the procedure is very painful, you can tell the technician. Squeezing the breast is not harmful, even if you have a lump.

Together with the technician, the radiologist checks the photos to see whether they are of sufficient technical quality, whether all the tissue is shown and if the photos allow good assessment. Sometimes it is necessary to take more photos.

The mammography and the assessment can take from 30 to 45 minutes.

If you are under 30, your doctor may suggest you have a breast ultrasound scan only. Younger women have denser breasts which means a mammogram is not as effective as ultrasound in detecting cancer.

### **Ultrasound Scan**

An ultrasound of the breast is often made following the mammography. This procedure also takes place in the Radiology Department. This procedure makes use of sound waves to examine the breast tissue. The skin of the breast is rubbed with gel, after which the breast is scanned by the radiologist with a small instrument.

The examination method is similar to an ultrasound during pregnancy. No X-rays are used and the procedure is not intrusive or painful. This procedure takes about 10 to 20 minutes.

### **Biopsy**

A biopsy involves taking a sample of tissue cells from your breast and testing them to see if they are cancerous. You may also need a scan and a needle test on lymph nodes in your armpit (axilla) to see if these are also affected. Biopsies can be taken in different ways and the type you have will depend on what your doctor knows about your condition. Different methods of carrying out a biopsy are outlined below:

- Needle aspiration may be used to test a sample of your breast cells for cancer or to drain a benign cyst (a small fluid-filled lump). Your doctor will use a small needle to extract a sample of cells, without removing any tissue.

- Needle biopsy is the most common type of biopsy. A sample of tissue is taken from a lump in your breast using a large needle. You will have a local anaesthetic, which means you will be awake but your breast will be numb. Your doctor may suggest you have a guided needle biopsy (usually this is guided by ultrasound or X-ray but sometimes MRI is used) to obtain a more precise and reliable diagnosis of cancer and to distinguish it from any non-invasive change, particularly pre-stage ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS).
- Vacuum-assisted biopsy (mammotome biopsy) is another method. The needle may be attached to a gentle suction tube which helps to obtain the sample and clear any bleeding from the area.

## **The results**

Every afternoon the results from all the tests are discussed within the Breast Care Team. The results will be reported to you on the same afternoon if possible and otherwise the next day by the nurse practitioner.

## **How to reach the Clinic**

Our hours of operation are on weekdays from 08.00- 17.00. Our contact information is:

- Tel: 088 979 47 80
- e-mail: [vragen@mammapoli.nu](mailto:vragen@mammapoli.nu)

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