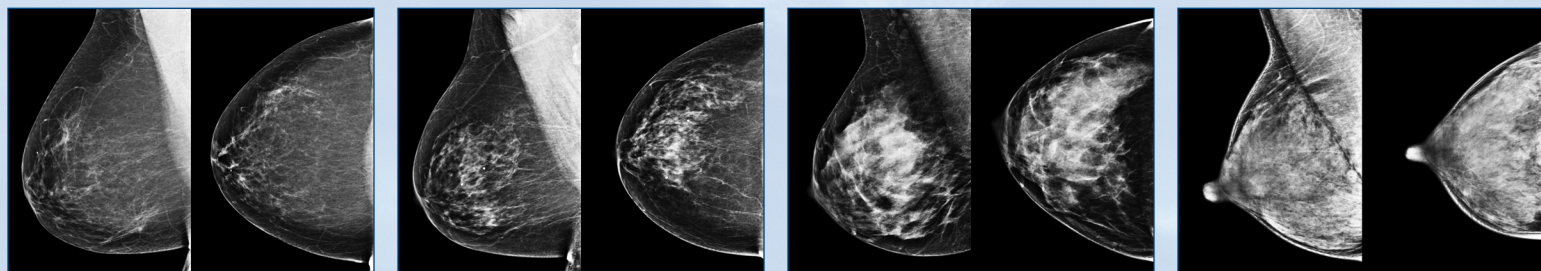


# Breast Density Notification in New Brunswick Primary Healthcare Provider Tool

*The following is intended to inform Primary Healthcare Providers (PCP) about recent changes in reporting of mammographic breast density and to help with discussing this and other breast cancer risk factors with their patients.*

Across New Brunswick, radiologists have started the standardized reporting of mammographic breast density using the Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System (BI-RADS) categories for breast composition. In addition to the radiology report, breast density results will be included in the individual notification letters sent to women by the NB Breast Cancer Screening Program following routine screening.

The following are the BI-RADS categories used to describe the amount of dense breast tissue:



**BI-RADS Category A:**  
almost entirely fatty

**BI-RADS Category B:**  
scattered areas of fibro glandular density

**BI-RADS Category C:**  
heterogeneously dense

**BI-RADS Category D:**  
extremely dense

Images courtesy of American College of Radiology (ACR) Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System- BI-RADS Atlas 5th Edition

## What is Breast Density?

- Breast density is a measure used to describe the proportion of different tissues that make up women's breasts. Breasts are made up of fatty (non-dense tissue) and glandular tissue (dense breast tissue), which includes milk glands, ducts and supportive tissue.
- **Dense breast tissue is common and is not considered abnormal.**
- Breast density can only be measured by a mammogram. Breast density cannot be detected by a physical exam and it is not related to breast size.
- A low breast density result (BI-RADS Category A or B) means that the patient is at average risk for developing breast cancer.
- The higher the breast density result (BI-RADS Category C or D), the more difficult it can be to see or detect abnormalities on a mammogram. High breast density may be associated with an increased risk of developing breast cancer.
- Breast density is assessed and reported by the radiologist as part of the mammogram report.

**PCPs should review breast density results with their patients and evaluate all risk factors for breast cancer.**

## Routine Breast Cancer Screening

The NB Breast Cancer Screening Program is a population-based screening program, which provides routine mammography screening to asymptomatic women (average risk) age 50-74. Women of average risk, age 40-49 or over 74 are accepted for screening mammography **only** by referral from their PCP. Routine screening is **not** recommended for women age 40 or younger.

- Routine screening should be done every two to three years with mammography, if the results are normal.
- Women should know what is normal for their breasts and discuss their risk factors for breast cancer (i.e.: personal or family history of cancer, obesity, age, hormone replacement, breast density, gene mutations, etc.) or any changes in their breasts with their physician or nurse practitioner.
- Breast Cancer and Your Risk brochure is available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/chronic-diseases/breast-cancer-your-risk.html>

For more information, refer to Breast Density Information Sheet for Participants or visit [www.gnb.ca/health](http://www.gnb.ca/health) (NB Cancer Network-Cancer Prevention and Screening).