



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála  
National Screening Service



# The Benefits and Harms of Screening



**This is a Plain English information leaflet.**

# The Benefits and Harms of Screening

Screening tests can help find diseases early and stop them.

Benefits are the good parts to screening services.

Harms are the bad parts to screening services.

No screening test is perfect.

For everyone, the benefits of screening should be greater than the harms.

We offer breast, cervical, bowel, and diabetic eye disease screening. This is because the benefits of these screening programmes are greater than the harms.

# The Benefits

Screening programmes try to find early signs of disease, for example, cancer or diabetic eye disease.

Screening can help us find diseases before a person has any signs or feels unwell.

This can stop the disease from getting worse.

Screening can help find a disease like cancer before it grows bigger or spreads to other parts of the body.

This can give people more treatment choices and a better chance of a cure.

Screening can cut down the number of people that get ill.

Screening can cut down the number of people that die from cancer and other diseases.

# The Harms

Sometimes, screening may find illnesses that would not have caused the person any problems.

After a screening test, a person could be told they have a disease when they do not.

The person may have more tests or worry when they did not need to.

Some people may worry while they wait for the screening test or the results of the test.

Some people may worry when they find out they have a health problem.

Some people may find screening tests uncomfortable or embarrassing.

Not all diseases can be seen on a screening test.

You could get a normal or negative result, but a disease is there.

# Important things to remember

It is important to see your doctor if you have symptoms that could mean cancer or another disease.

It is important to see your doctor even if you had a negative or normal screening test.

# Screening – your choice

It is a person's choice to have a screening test or not.

All screening tries to find a balance between benefits and harms.

Each person must decide what is right for them.

You can talk to your doctor or healthcare provider about our screening programmes.

# More information

[www.breastcheck.ie](http://www.breastcheck.ie)

[www.cervicalcheck.ie](http://www.cervicalcheck.ie)

[www.bowelscreen.ie](http://www.bowelscreen.ie)

[www.diabeticretinascreen.ie](http://www.diabeticretinascreen.ie)

Phone us free on 1800 45 45 55

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NSS/PUB/PH-13



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