

St. Vincent's University Hospital
Regional Cancer Centre **Dublin Mid-Leinster**

Visiting the
**Symptomatic
Breast Clinic**

A Guide for Patients

Contents

Patient Information	2
Mammogram	6
Ultrasound	8
Core Biopsy or Fine Needle Aspiration	10
Results	11
If You Have a Query	12
If You Cannot Attend for Your Appointment	12
Travel2Care Scheme	13
Hospital/Clinic Details	14

This booklet was prepared by the National Cancer Control Programme in consultation with health care professionals and people who have attended a symptomatic breast service.

Patient Information

Your doctor has referred you to the Breast Clinic - the full name is the Symptomatic Breast Clinic. This may be because you have a breast lump, or because of another symptom such as discomfort or discharge, or a strong family history of breast disease.

This booklet tells you what to expect when you attend one of the eight Symptomatic Breast Clinics in Ireland, which have been put in place to provide you with the best possible care.

You will be examined by a doctor at the clinic. The doctor may decide to refer you for some tests. This may involve spending time in the Radiology or X-ray department. You might have a mammogram or breast ultrasound, or both. You may also require a test which will involve having a small needle put into the breast.

THE MAJORITY OF BREAST LUMPS ARE NOT CANCER.

The majority of patients who attend a breast clinic only require one visit.

How long will I be at the clinic?

We aim to see all patients promptly and carry out all your tests in one day. Sometimes, there may be unavoidable delays, particularly if you require a number of tests. It is possible that you may need to spend most of the day at the hospital and you should make allowances for this. It is important that you arrive for your appointment on time and not too early as this could result in a longer stay for you at the clinic.

What should I bring with me?

It is **important** to note that if you have had any previous mammograms or x-rays taken of your breast, please arrange to bring these with you. You will need to contact the hospital or clinic where you had these tests carried out and arrange to get copies of the files to bring with you. If you have difficulty in getting your x-ray film, please contact the secretary in the Breast Clinic in advance of your appointment.

It may be advisable to bring along something to read, as patients can sometimes spend a long time at the clinic if they are going for more than one test.

What should I wear?

Wear comfortable clothes with a separate top and bottom as you will need to take your top and your bra off for a physical examination and tests. Avoid wearing talcum powder, deodorant or perfume as they may interfere with some tests.

Can I bring a relative or friend to the clinic?

Yes. Everyone in the clinic is aware that coming to a breast clinic can be a worrying time. You are welcome to bring a relative or friend.

We would recommend that you don't bring children with you to the clinic, for your own comfort and that of your child. However, if this isn't possible, we suggest you bring a friend or relative to mind them while you are being seen.

There may be areas where accompanying persons are not permitted.

If you are returning to the clinic for results we would recommend you bring a relative or friend.

What happens when I arrive at the Breast Clinic?

When you check in you will be asked by the receptionist to confirm your personal and contact details. You will meet a doctor, who is a member of the breast team, who will ask you details about your symptoms and will carry out an examination.

After examination, the doctor may decide you need some tests, such as a **mammogram, ultrasound or biopsy**. If possible these tests will be done on the same day as your clinic appointment. A Breast Care Nurse is available at the clinic to provide information and support.

What tests might I have?

Depending on your age and symptoms you may have a mammogram or a breast ultrasound scan. Some people will have both tests performed.

After a mammogram or ultrasound the doctor may decide to take a sample from the lump, either by a core biopsy or fine needle aspiration. Explanations of these tests are provided later in this booklet.

What is triple assessment?

Triple assessment means you will have the following:-

- Be examined by a breast surgeon
- Have a mammogram and/or ultrasound
- Have a core biopsy or fine needle aspiration

It should be noted that not all patients who attend the Symptomatic Breast Clinic require triple assessment.

Mammogram

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. The X-ray is a picture of the inside of your body. It is produced by exposure to a controlled source of X-rays and the image is recorded on special photographic film or on a computer.

Are there any risks in having a mammogram?

A mammogram is a safe procedure. There are some risks involved with X-rays. All risks are relative, and the benefits of the examination have to be taken into account.

It is **essential** that you tell the Radiographer if

- You have breast implants
- You are pregnant
- You think you might be pregnant

Who will you see when you have a mammogram?

A radiographer will carry out this test.

Are you required to make any special preparations for a mammogram?

Wear comfortable clothes with a separate top and bottom. Avoid wearing talcum powder, deodorant or perfume.

What does the mammogram involve?

You will be asked to undress to the waist and put on a gown. Once you are in the X-ray room, each breast will, in turn, be positioned against part of an X-ray machine. Each breast needs to be compressed between the X-ray machine and a flat X-ray plate. A certain amount of pressure is felt briefly. This pressure is important to get good results.

A mammogram is not generally painful but it can be uncomfortable. Tenderness in the breasts can sometimes make the procedure more uncomfortable. Two X-ray views are taken of each breast from different angles.

The radiographer will go behind a screen, but at all times you are in view of the radiographer, and can be heard, should you have a problem. You need to keep still. You may hear a slight whirring from the X-ray machine. Each mammogram exposure takes only a few seconds. You will be in the x-ray room for approximately 20 minutes.

Ultrasound

What is a breast ultrasound?

An ultrasound scan uses sound waves to build up a picture of the inside of the breast.

Are there any risks in having a breast ultrasound?

No, there are no known risks and it is considered to be very safe. It is a commonly used way of getting a picture of the breast.

Who will you see when you have a breast ultrasound?

You will be cared for by a radiologist or a sonographer depending upon the type of scan you are having.

Are you required to make any special preparations before a breast ultrasound examination?

No.

What should I wear?

Wear comfortable clothes that have a separate top and bottom as you will need to take your top and bra off for the test to be carried out.

What does the ultrasound scan involve?

You will be asked to undress to the waist and lie down on a couch. The radiologist or sonographer will ask you about your breast symptoms. Once you are lying down your breasts will be examined to check the position of any lumps. A gel will be applied to your breasts and a small hand held sensor will be moved over the skin to view the breast from different angles. The lights in the room will be dimmed, so that the pictures on the monitor can be seen more clearly.

How long will the breast ultrasound take?

The scan takes approximately 5-10 minutes.

Will the breast ultrasound hurt?

No.

Core Biopsy or Fine Needle Aspiration

If you have a lump the doctor may do one of two tests to get a sample of the tissue/cells from the lump.

- i) A **core biopsy** is when a needle is inserted into your breast lump to get a sample of the lump. Local anaesthetic is used prior to the insertion of the needle to numb the area and reduce pain.
- ii) A **fine needle aspiration (FNA)** is when some fluid or cells are removed from a lump through a smaller needle.

Ultrasound or mammography equipment may be used to assist the doctor in obtaining the tissue/cells.

The cells or tissue are sent to the laboratory and examined under a microscope. The results are not available on the day of your clinic visit and you will be asked to return to the clinic at a later date.

Will the biopsy hurt?

The biopsy can be sore. However local anaesthetic is given and the procedure only takes a few minutes. Occasionally there may be a little bleeding or bruising.

Results

When are the results available?

You will usually get the results of your mammogram or ultrasound on the day of your visit. However the results of a core biopsy or fine needle aspiration are not available on your first visit and you will be given an appointment to attend for the results.

Staff will process your tests as quickly as possible. Everyone in the clinic is aware that this can be a worrying and stressful time.

If you are returning to the clinic for results we would recommend you bring a relative or friend.

If You Have A Query

If you have any queries regarding your visit or these tests please contact your breast care nurse team at your symptomatic breast clinic or your GP.

If You Cannot Attend For Your Appointment

Please contact the breast clinic secretary if you are unable to attend the clinic. Another person can then be offered your appointment. The secretary will offer you an alternative appointment if you wish.

Details of how to contact your breast clinic secretary can be found at the end of this booklet.

Travel2Care Scheme

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) understands that some women referred for investigation, treatment and care to Symptomatic Breast Clinic may need help towards meeting some of the travel costs associated with attending the service.

The NCCP funds a scheme entitled Travel2Care Scheme which is run by the Irish Cancer Society, the national cancer care charity.

The Travel2Care scheme is specifically aimed at women who have a genuine financial difficulty in meeting the costs of travelling to the Breast Clinic. It will refund the costs of public transport or an equal amount towards the cost of private transport.

To avail of assistance through this scheme, you must submit an application directly to the Irish Cancer Society. An application form is available from:-

Travel2Care

Irish Cancer Society, Dublin 4.

Tel: 01-2316619

Email: travel2care@irishcancer.ie




Hospital/Clinic Details

1 About St. Vincent's University Hospital Cancer Centre

St. Vincent's University Hospital Breast Cancer Centre was founded in the early 1980's and was the first dedicated Symptomatic Breast Clinic in the country. It is now recognised that patients with breast cancer have improved outcomes if they are treated in such a dedicated centre where staff are breast care professionals with expertise in this area.

Over the last few years approximately one quarter of new breast cancers have been treated at St. Vincent's every year and it has been designated as one of the eight national centres for breast cancer.

We provide cancer services chiefly to people who live in South-East Dublin, Tallaght, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, East Wicklow and from Portlaoise and the surrounding area. Our cancer services include tests to diagnose cancer, surgical cancer treatments, chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments (St. Luke's Hospital and St. Vincent's Private Hospital).



The Breast Clinic is a primary assessment centre as well as a tertiary referral centre for complex cases. It also provides advice to other hospitals and doctors in managing patients with breast cancer. The goals of the Breast Clinic are:

- To facilitate the early detection and diagnosis of breast cancer.
- To develop, implement and promote “best practice”, patient focused, multi-disciplinary breast care.
- To translate research findings into improving the care and quality of life of patients with breast cancer.
- To improve detection and treatment of breast cancer through ongoing public education as well as that of health professionals.
- To monitor breast cancer outcomes through data collection, analysis and dissemination.

The Mission of the Breast Unit is:

“To lead in the provision of easily accessible high quality care for women with breast complaints through Information, Education, Diagnosis, Screening, Treatment and Research”

Clinics

There are two general breast clinics and two triple assessment clinics (TAC) held in the hospital each week.

2 Location

The main reception desk is on the ground floor of the Ambulatory Day Care Centre (ADCC). The Breast Clinic is held in Suite 4 on the 1st floor of the Ambulatory Day Care Centre (ADCC).

The St Vincent's University Hospital Cancer Centre is found at Elm Park, Dublin 4.

Main Hospital Phone Number

Tel: (01) 221 4000

Fax: (01) 221 4001

Breast Clinic Phone Number

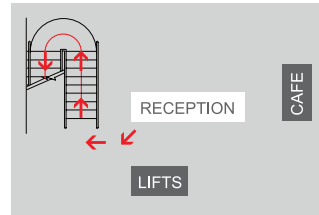
Tel: (01) 2213778

Fax (01) 2213678

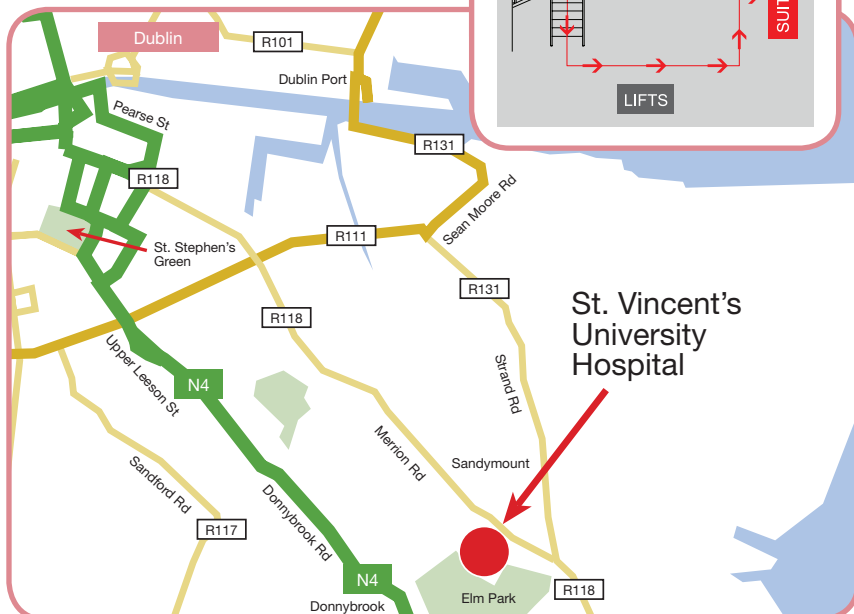
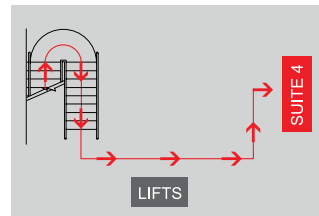
Website: www.stvincents.ie

Location of the Symptomatic Breast Clinic

Ground Floor



First Floor



3 Transport

Bus

These buses stop close to St. Vincent's University Hospital:

No. 4, 5, 7, 7A	from O'Connell St.
No. 8	from Parnell Square
No. 45	from Eden Quay

Most of the buses (except the No. 4 bus) stop on the Merrion Road outside the front of the hospital. The No. 4 bus stops on Nutley Lane at the side of the hospital. For details of pick up points along any of these routes, please contact Dublin Bus Passenger Information Service **(01) 873 4222** or look up **www.dublinbus.ie**.

PLEASE NOTE: The St. Vincent's University Hospital stage is referred to as Merrion Road (Elm Park Hospital) stage on the Dublin Bus timetables.

DART or Train

If you are travelling by train, the Sydney Parade DART station is close to the hospital. Intercity and Suburban trains also stop at Sydney Parade Station, for example, from Dundalk, Drogheda, Arklow and Rosslare. For further information please contact Irish Rail on **1850 366 222** or look up **www.irishrail.ie**.

4 Car Parking

Parking space is limited on the hospital campus. All public car parking on site is provided for in the new multi-storey car park and in the basement of the new building. There is a charge for car parking.

Taxis

You may order a taxi to collect you from the hospital entrance. There is a phone with a direct connection to the taxi company close by the front door of the hospital. Please ask the staff at the main reception desk.

5 Hospital Facilities

Restaurant and Coffee Shop

There is a restaurant on the ground floor, a coffee shop in the atrium beside the main reception desk and a coffee shop in the main hall are open to visitors. Opening hours are as follows:

Restaurant

Monday - Sunday 7.15 a.m. - 12.30 p.m., 1.45 p.m. - 6.30 p.m.

The restaurant is reserved for staff on restricted lunch breaks from 12.45 p.m. - 1.45 p.m and closed to visitors after 5.30 p.m. For patient care, service is restricted to staff at high demand times and visitors' co-operation with this is appreciated.

Coffee Shop (Atrium)

Monday - Friday	8.00 a.m. - 7.30 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday	9.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.

Coffee Shop (Main Hall)

A coffee shop and sandwich bar with eat-in and take away

Monday – Friday	7.45 a.m. - 7.30 p.m.
Saturday	9.00 a.m. - 7.30 p.m.
Sunday	9.30 a.m. - 7.30 p.m.

6 Key Contacts

For appointments and further information please phone the Breast Clinic on (01) 2213778 or by fax (01) 2213678

Main hospital switchboard	(01) 221 4000
Breast Clinic Secretary	(01) 221 3778/221 3247
Breast Care Nurses or	(01) 221 4448
	(01)221 3245
Breast Clinic Appointments	(01) 221 3778
Oncology Day Ward	(01) 221 4753/3683
St Luke's 1 (Surgical) Ward	(01) 221 3398
Oncology Ward (St Anne's Ward)	(01) 221 3650
Social Worker	(01) 221 4831/221 4286
Radiology Department (X-Ray)	(01) 221 4992
Clinical Research Trials	(01) 221 4982

7 Support Programmes

Reach To Recovery

Reach to Recovery is a programme for women who have had, or are about to have treatment for breast cancer. There is a Reach to Recovery Volunteer available at the Breast Clinic during Clinic times and you can also contact them when you are in hospital so they can come to visit during or after surgery for breast cancer. All volunteers are women, who themselves have been successfully treated for breast cancer. More information can be found on the Irish Cancer Society Website on the link overleaf.

Reach to Recovery
c/o Irish Cancer Society,
43/45 Northumberland Road,
Dublin 4

Freefone: **1800 30 90 40**

Email: support@irishcancer.ie

Website: <http://www.cancer.ie/support/reach.php>

8 Feedback and Complaints

We welcome your comments and suggestions. The comments of patients, relatives and visitors are used as a gauge and measure of quality service. We welcome suggestions or ideas on how we might improve our service to patients. If you have any ideas that might help please talk to any member of staff or you can e-mail **feedback@st-vincent.ie**.

St. Vincent's University Hospital has a complaints procedure. If you have a complaint about your care you should raise it with hospital staff. If you do not wish to discuss your complaint at local level, you should write to the Complaint Officer or email **complaints@st-vincent.ie**.

All complaints will be acknowledged within five working days and you will receive a response within thirty days. For more information see our hospital website **www.stvincent.ie** or phone the Consumer Affairs Office on **(01) 221 4013**.

We wish you well

National Cancer Control Programme

An Clár Náisiúnta Rialaithe Ailse
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www.cancercontrol.hse.ie

August 2009