

# Visiting a breast clinic

## at The Royal Women's Hospital



Breasts change a lot over a woman's life. Some common reasons for change are: pregnancy; breastfeeding; hormonal changes over each menstrual cycle; and weight loss or gain. Breasts also change their shape and feel as a woman ages.

At some stage in their lives, many women have a change in their breast(s) that is different to their usual hormonal changes. Sometimes these changes need to be checked by a specialist. You have been referred to our Clinic to investigate a change in your breast that might not be normal for you.

Women often worry that their breast change is cancer. Although the changes we investigate are often uncomfortable, painful or worrying to women, they are rarely cancer. There are many reasons for unusual breast changes, and most are not dangerous or harmful.

Some women also worry about tests and procedures at the Breast Clinic. These are not dangerous and usually are not painful. You may ask the specialist questions at any time and we will try to make sure that you get your results as quickly as possible.

This sheet has some information about your visit. We hope it will answer some of your questions.

If you would like to ask other questions or discuss any worries, please contact the Breast Care Nurse on 9344 2721.

### What happens?

When you first visit the Clinic, we will use a number of steps to learn more about your breast change.

#### **First, the specialist will talk with you about your health and your family's history**

This will include questions about:

- **The symptoms or signs of the change in your breast**
- **Any past breast changes or illnesses that you have had**
- **Whether any of your immediate family members have had diseases such as breast or ovarian cancer (we understand that not every woman knows her family's history)**

#### **Second, the specialist will examine your breasts**

This involves feeling both breasts, including your armpits. You will need to take off your top and bra for this check.

#### **Third ...**

Often the information gathered in the first two steps is enough to tell us that a woman's breast change is normal.

Other times we need to do further checks or tests to know what the breast change is. If this is the case for you, we will give you an information sheet about further tests. You will usually need a second appointment for these tests.

Your specialist will discuss your situation with you. With your consent, we will also send your information back to your General Practitioner (GP).

### Who will I see?

You will see specialists and nurses on your first visit. Some of these will be male. Please let us know if this concerns you. We cannot always provide female staff, however we can ensure a woman is with you if men are present.

This clinic is part of a teaching hospital for trainee doctors. Medical students take an active role in patient care, closely supervised by a qualified specialist. This is an important part of their training. Your specialist will probably ask your permission for a student to attend your visit. You have the right to refuse or accept this. Your decision should not affect the quality of your care.

## What should I bring?

- Your GP's referral letter if you have been given one
- X-rays or at least reports of any mammograms, breast ultrasounds or other tests that your GP has given you
- A list of questions
- A list of all of your current medications, including any that you bought without a prescription (your pharmacist might be able to help you prepare this)
- Something to read or do in case you need to wait
- Your Medicare card
- Your Health Care Card if you have one

It might be good to come with someone who can give you support and keep you company.

## 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 a physical examination and any tests.

## How long will it take?

Your appointment might take up to 2 or 3 hours. Make sure your car parking, public transport, child minding and other arrangements allow for this.

## What will it cost?

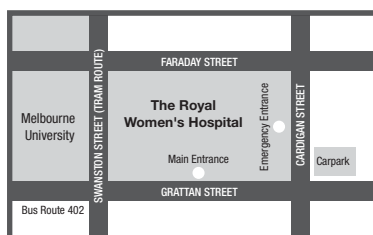
If you are an Australian resident, Medicare covers your visit and you will not have to pay anything. If you are not eligible for Medicare, please discuss your situation with your referring doctor.

## Where is the clinic?

The Royal Women's Hospital is on the corner of Grattan and Swanston Streets in Carlton. The Breast Unit is in the Main Building on level 5.

Melways map reference is 2B (red map) F8.

There are signs to the Outpatients Department or you can ask at reception for directions.



## Car parking

Parking in the street is limited to 1 or 2 hours. Your visit might take longer than this, so we suggest that you use the car park or public transport.

The entrance to the car park is in Cardigan Street. Fees are displayed at the entrance. Parking for your visit could cost up to \$21. The cost of a 2-3 hour visit is about \$12.

Parking for people with disabilities is available in Grattan Street and in the car park.

## Public transport

Trams (from city): Most trams from Swanston Street stop at the Royal Women's Hospital.

Bus: No 402 between East Melbourne and Footscray stops outside the hospital in Grattan Street.

For more information, contact VicTrip on 131 638

## If problems arise

If you have a problem with your care, the hospital's Patient Advocate is there to help you. You can contact them via the hospital reception or switchboard.

## Contacting us

Please contact the Outpatients Department on **9344 2183** if:

- You need an interpreter. We can arrange a professional interpreter. It is always better not to use a family member or friend to interpret, as they should be there to support you.
- You have a disability that might mean you need a longer appointment or special help.
- Your appointment time no longer suits you.

If you would like to talk to the Breast Care Nurse you can contact her on: **9344 2721**.

## You and your GP

It's a good idea to visit your GP after you have been to the Breast Clinic. That way, you can make sure you fully understand any information, tests or diagnosis that the specialist gave you. It's also a good chance to talk about what you are thinking and feeling about your breast change or diagnosis. Your GP can also help you if you would like a second opinion about your breast change.

If you don't have a regular GP, ask friends, family or your local community health centre for some suggestions. It's good to have a GP who you know and trust.