

Breast Cancer Screening Navigation Script

This document supports your conversations with breast cancer screening candidates. Development of the navigation script is based on field research, conducted with a diverse set of women, to identify common barriers to being screened for breast cancer. This navigation script is intended to help you convey the importance of breast cancer screening and address those barriers.

The goal of a conversation is **to ensure that eligible candidates will complete their breast cancer screening according to the recommendations set forth by your organization.**

Please note that this resource is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical advice. Please refer to your organization's guidelines when discussing breast cancer screening with patients and advise them to consult their healthcare providers for all medical advice or questions.

Please keep in mind that women may have various concerns ranging from simple educational needs to complex emotional fears. In addition, screening candidates will have varying levels of education and understanding about breast cancer and mammograms. You may find the following framework useful when answering questions:

1 Clarify

Ask questions to learn the nature of her concern/question to ensure that you are addressing her true concerns.

2 Empathize

Acknowledge that her question/concern is valid and express empathy (if applicable).

3 Respond

Respond to her question/concern with transparency and specificity. Consider relaying a personal story about the importance of breast cancer screening to help connect with the screening candidate.

4 Schedule

After all her questions and concerns have been addressed, ensure that she has a mammogram appointment scheduled. If not, ask if you can schedule a mammogram appointment for her.

Please note that the scripts provided here are not a comprehensive and final list of responses, but rather are intended to act as guideposts that can spur additional responses, depending on the specific scenario and screening candidate's concern.

Here is an example of how the framework may be used.*

CONVERSATION FLOW	EXAMPLE SCRIPT
<p>Introduce yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Hello. My name is _____. Our records show you’re due for your mammogram. Did you receive some information about this in the mail?”</i>
<p>Screening candidate states, “Yes, I did receive a brochure in the mail stating that I need a mammogram, but I don’t think I need one.”</p>	
<p>Ask clarifying questions to better understand the woman’s concern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Can you help me understand why you don’t think you need a mammogram?”</i>
<p>Screening candidate states, “I haven’t felt a lump and I don’t have any family history of breast cancer.”</p>	
<p>Empathize to convey that you understand her concern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I hear you. You’re not alone. Many people think they don’t need screening.</i> • <i>Even if you don’t feel a lump, screening is important.”¹</i>
<p>Respond directly to address the screening candidate’s concerns. Use the objection handler to help with specific worries</p> <p>Note: Sharing personal stories may help women open up and connect with you. If the opportunity presents itself, convey a personal story of your own about breast cancer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Despite what you might have heard, all women are at risk for breast cancer.”²</i> • <i>In 85% of breast cancer cases, there is no family history of the disease.³</i> <p>[Consider sharing a personal story about the importance of breast cancer screening to help connect with the woman. For example, maybe you have a friend, neighbor, or family member who had no symptoms of the disease but still got breast cancer.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>According to the American Cancer Society, mammograms can help to find breast cancer, often years before you ever feel a lump or experience symptoms.”¹</i>
<p>Schedule: If the screening candidate is comfortable, ensure that she is scheduled for a mammogram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Can I help you make an appointment to get a mammogram?”</i>
<p>If the screening candidate states she is not ready to make an appointment, offer to follow up at a later date</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It’s okay if you aren’t ready to make an appointment today.</i> • <i>Would it be okay if I check in with you in a couple of months?”</i> <p>[Flag for follow-up conversation.]</p>

*This script is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always use your best professional judgment in your conversations.

Objection Handler

Women may have various reasons why they have not been screened for breast cancer. Below, you will find some common objections and examples of possible responses.

Keep in mind that one of the most important things you can do is to connect with the woman you're speaking with. Consider sharing a personal story to increase the woman's receptivity to your message.

Objection 1

I haven't ever felt a lump.

Objection 2

I don't have a family history of breast cancer.

Objection 3

I don't trust mammograms to tell me if I have breast cancer.

Objection 4

I don't know how often I need to be screened.

Objection 5

I don't have time to schedule my mammogram.

Objection 6

It's expensive to have a mammogram.

Objection 7

I don't want a mammogram because it uses radiation.

OBJECTION/CONCERN	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
Objection 1: <i>I haven't ever felt a lump.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"It's important to get screened. You can have breast cancer and not feel it at all.</i> • <i>Getting a mammogram every year offers a better chance of finding breast cancer years before feeling a lump or having symptoms."</i>¹
Objection 2: <i>I don't have a family history of breast cancer.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Despite some common myths, all women are at risk for breast cancer."</i>² • <i>In 85% of breast cancer cases, there is no family history of the disease."</i>³
Objection 3: <i>I don't trust mammograms to tell me if I have breast cancer.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"A mammogram is the best breast cancer screening test we have at this time."</i>⁴ • <i>Mammograms can correctly find breast cancer in almost 5 out of 6 women."</i>⁵ • <i>Many years of research show that women who get regularly screened for breast cancer are¹:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>More likely to detect breast cancer early</i> – <i>More likely to avoid extensive surgery and chemotherapy</i> – <i>More likely to be cured."</i>
Objection 4: <i>I don't know how often I need to be screened.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"There is a lot of different advice about when to get your breast cancer screening.</i> • <i>The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists says that women^{1,6}:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Aged 40 should be offered annual screening mammograms</i> – <i>Aged 45-54 should have annual mammograms</i> – <i>Aged 55 and older may continue annual mammograms or switch to every other year</i> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>[insert organizational guidelines here]</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Keep in mind, however, that if you have a higher risk of breast cancer, you may need to start screening earlier."</i>¹

Objection Handler (continued)

OBJECTION/CONCERN	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Objection 5: I don't have time to schedule my mammogram.</p>	<p>[Help screening candidates schedule their mammogram when possible.]</p>
<p>Objection 6: It's expensive to have a mammogram.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Getting a mammogram may not cost a lot. • Most insurance plans cover 100% of screening costs. Call your insurance plan to check your coverage.”⁷ <div data-bbox="506 541 1458 697" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>[insert any available financial assistance available to patients here]</p> </div>
<p>Objection 7: I don't want a mammogram because it uses radiation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I understand your concerns. Modern mammograms use low radiation doses to get breast x-rays that are high in image quality.⁸ • Most people in the U.S. are normally exposed to a little radiation in their everyday life. Radiation comes from natural sources, like the sun, water, food, and air. Scientists call this background radiation.^{8,9} • To put it in perspective, the amount of radiation used during a mammogram is about the same as you would get in about 7 weeks of your everyday life.⁸ • The American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute agree that the benefits of a mammogram are greater than any harm from the radiation exposure. Of course, if you have specific concerns, you should talk to your doctor.^{8,10} • Just like any other medical procedure, it's wise to understand any risks you could incur.”

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

There are many other scenarios in which a screening candidate may need clarifying information about breast cancer screening. Always use your best professional judgment in answering questions/concerns.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question 1: *What is breast cancer?*

Question 2: *How serious is breast cancer?*

Question 3: *Should I be screened for breast cancer?*

Question 4: *How do you screen for breast cancer?*

Question 5: *What breast cancer screening tests are recommended?*

Question 6: *What is a mammogram?*

Question 7: *Who performs a mammogram?*

Question 8: *How long does a mammogram take?*

Question 9: *Is a mammogram safe?*

Question 10: *Can I get a mammogram if I have breast implants?*

Question 11: *What are other options for breast cancer screening besides mammograms?*

Question 12: *How much does a mammogram cost?*

Question 13: *Do I have to pay for office visits when I see my doctor for breast cancer screening?*

Question 14: *Do you have transportation available to help me go get my mammogram?*

Frequently Asked Questions

QUESTION	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Question 1: What is breast cancer?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Breast cancer is a disease in which abnormal cells form in the tissues of the breast.”¹¹ • Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women.¹² • Breast cancer is the No. 2 cause of cancer death among women.¹² • Regular mammograms can help detect breast cancer early when treatment is more likely to be effective.”¹¹
<p>Question 2: How serious is breast cancer?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Breast cancer is the No. 2 cause of cancer death among women.¹² • On average, every 2 minutes a woman in the U.S. is diagnosed with breast cancer.^{12,13} • One in 8 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime.³ • One woman dies from breast cancer every 13 minutes in the U.S.^{12,13} • With regular screening, you are more likely to catch breast cancer early.”¹¹
<p>Question 3: Should I be screened for breast cancer?</p>	<p>Clarify: “Have you had a mammogram this calendar year?”</p> <p>[If yes, report the results to her doctor to determine if she is still a screening candidate and follow up with her.]</p> <p>[If no, continue below.]</p> <p>—“According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, women starting at 40 should be offered annual screening mammograms, and between ages 45 and 54, should have annual mammograms. Women 55 and older may continue annual mammograms or switch to every other year.”¹⁶</p> <div data-bbox="545 1205 1463 1383" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; background-color: #e6f2ff;"> <p>[insert organizational guidelines here]</p> </div> <p>—If you have a higher risk of breast cancer, you may need to start screening earlier.¹</p> <p>—Even if you haven’t felt a lump, screening is important.”^{1,6}</p>
<p>Question 4: How do you screen for breast cancer?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Breast cancer screening can be done using a mammogram, a test that looks for the disease when a person doesn’t have symptoms.”⁸ • A mammogram uses X-rays to create images of the breast. Your doctor will then look at the X-ray images to see if there are signs of cancer.⁸ • You can have cancer and not be able to feel it at all.”

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

QUESTION	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Question 5: What breast cancer screening tests are recommended?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, women starting at 40 should be offered annual screening mammograms, and should have annual mammograms from ages 45-54. Women 55 and older may continue annual mammograms or switch to every other year.^{1,6} • If you have a higher risk for breast cancer, your doctor may want you to start screening earlier. The American Cancer Society recommends women who are at a higher risk should get an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and a mammogram every year.¹ • Women with a higher risk may have one or more of the following¹: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Certain gene changes, such as in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes (pronounced ‘brack-ah’). — A family history of the disease. That is, your mother, daughter, or sister was diagnosed with breast cancer. — Certain uncommon genetic syndromes.”
<p>Question 6: What is a mammogram?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast.⁸ During a mammogram, the breast is pressed between 2 plates of glass while X-rays are used to take pictures of the breast. • This test may find tumors that are too small to feel.”
<p>Question 7: Who performs a mammogram?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “An X-ray technician performs the mammogram.”
<p>Question 8: How long does a mammogram take?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It usually takes around 30 minutes to complete a mammogram of both breasts. Of course, there may be added time waiting in the waiting room. Your provider should be able to give you a better estimate of total time.”⁷
<p>Question 9: Is a mammogram safe?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Modern mammograms use low radiation doses.⁸ • People in the U.S. are normally exposed to a little radiation in their everyday life. Radiation comes from natural sources, like the sun, water, food, and air.^{8,9} • To put it in perspective, the amount of radiation used during a mammogram is about the same as you would get in about 7 weeks of your everyday life.^{8,9} • The American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute agree that the benefits of a mammogram are greater than any harm from the radiation exposure.^{8,10} • However, if you might be pregnant, let your healthcare provider and X-ray technologist know. Screening mammograms aren’t routinely done in pregnant women.”⁸

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

QUESTION	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Question 10: Can I get a mammogram if I have breast implants?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yes, you should still get a mammogram even if you have breast implants. • When you make an appointment for your mammogram, and when you go for your regular screening, be sure to let the doctor and staff know you have implants. • Implants are pretty common and there are easy ways the doctor can adjust the image and find cancer as soon as possible. • Doctors may take extra pictures to see more of your breast around the implants.”¹⁴
<p>Question 11: What are other options for breast cancer screening besides mammograms?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A mammogram is the best breast cancer screening test we have at this time.”⁴ • There are other screening tests, like thermography and ultrasounds. These types of screening tests are not as good as mammograms for cancer screening. If you are worried about having a mammogram, please talk to your doctor about which screening test is right for you.”¹⁵ <div data-bbox="548 802 1464 982" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; background-color: #e6f2ff;"> <p>[insert institution’s guidelines here]</p> </div>
<p>Question 12: How much does a mammogram cost?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Many insurance plans cover the cost of screening.”⁷ <p>[Add specific insurance coverage information here, if available.]</p> <p>If insurance coverage is unknown:</p> <p>“You will need to talk with your insurance provider to be sure.”</p>
<p>Question 13: Do I have to pay for office visits when I see my doctor for breast cancer screening?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There may be a co-pay for the office visit.”⁷
<p>Question 14: Do you have transportation available to help me go get my mammogram?</p>	<div data-bbox="548 1465 1464 1654" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; background-color: #e6f2ff;"> <p>[insert patient assistance here]</p> </div>

References: **1.** American Cancer Society recommendations for the early detection of breast cancer. American Cancer Society website. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/american-cancer-society-recommendations-for-the-early-detection-of-breast-cancer.html>. Last revised August 18, 2016. Accessed March 21, 2018. **2.** Breast cancer statistics. Susan G. Komen website. <http://ww5.komen.org/BreastCancer/Statistics.html>. Updated April 10, 2017. Accessed March 21, 2018. **3.** U.S. breast cancer statistics. Breastcancer.org. http://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/understand_bc/statistics. Last modified March 10, 2017. Accessed March 21, 2018. **4.** Limitations of mammograms. American Cancer Society website. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/mammograms/limitations-of-mammograms.html>. Accessed March 21, 2018. **5.** Performance measures for 1,838,372 screening mammography examinations from 2004 to 2008 by age. Breast Cancer Surveillance Consortium website. http://www.bcssc-research.org/statistics/performance/screening/2009/perf_age.html. Accessed March 21, 2018. **6.** ACOG revises breast cancer screening guidance: Ob-Gyns promote shared decision making. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists website. <https://www.acog.org/About-ACOG/News-Room/News-Releases/2017/ACOG-Revises-Breast-Cancer-Screening-Guidance--ObGyns-Promote-Shared-Decision-Making>. Published June 22, 2017. Accessed May 9, 2018. **7.** Learn about mammograms. SisterPact website. <http://www.sisterpact.com/learn/#>. Accessed March 21, 2018. **8.** Mammogram basics. American Cancer Society website. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/mammograms/mammogram-basics.html>. Last revised August 18, 2016. Accessed March 21, 2018. **9.** Radiation is a part of our world. American Nuclear Society website. http://www.nuclearconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Radiation-Dose-Chart_web.pdf. Accessed March 9, 2018. **10.** Mammograms. National Cancer Institute website. <https://www.cancer.gov/types/breast/mammograms-fact-sheet>. Accessed March 26, 2018. **11.** General information about breast cancer. National Cancer Institute website. <https://www.cancer.gov/types/breast/patient/breast-treatment-pdq>. Accessed March 21, 2018. **12.** American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts & Figures 2018*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2018. <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2018/cancer-facts-and-figures-2018.pdf>. Accessed March 21, 2018. **13.** Breast cancer facts. Susan G. Komen website. <http://ww5.komen.org/uploadedFiles/Content/AboutUsMediaCenter-2/BC%20Facts%20-%20082712.pdf>. Revised August 2012. Accessed March 21, 2018. **14.** Mammograms for women with breast implants. American Cancer Society website. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/mammograms/mammograms-for-women-with-breast-implants.html>. Accessed March 9, 2018. **15.** Safe mammogram alternatives for breast cancer screening? National Women's Health Network website. <https://nwhn.org/mammogram-alternatives/>. Accessed March 21, 2018.

