

Breast Cancer Screening Navigation Script for South Asian Women

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 most significant to females of South Asian origin.

The goal of a conversation is to help 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, check if she has a mammogram appointment scheduled. If not, ask if you can assist her by scheduling a mammogram appointment for her at this time. If she still has concerns, a follow-up may be required at a later time.

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"> • “Hello. My name is _____. Our records show you’re due for your mammogram. Did you receive some information about this in the mail?”
<p><i>Screening candidate states, “Yes, I did receive a brochure in the mail stating that I need a mammogram, but I don’t know if I need one.”</i></p>	
<p>Ask clarifying questions to better understand the woman’s concern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Can you help me understand why you don’t think you need a mammogram?”
<p><i>Screening candidate states, “I haven’t felt a lump and I don’t have or don’t know if I have any family history of breast cancer.”</i></p>	
<p>Empathize to convey that you understand her concern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I hear you. You’re not alone. Many women are uncertain and have questions about the importance of screening. • Even if you don’t feel a lump, screening is important.”¹
<p>Respond directly to address the screening candidate’s concerns. Help address any barriers to screening with these sample statements.</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"> • “Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women of South Asian origin.”² • You can still be at risk for breast cancer, even if you do not feel a lump.¹ • You can still be at risk even if you do not know of or have no family history of the disease.³ • In about 85% of breast cancer cases, there is no family history of the disease.³ <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"> • According to the American Cancer Society, screening tests like mammograms can help find breast cancer before you experience symptoms or feel a lump.”¹
<p>Schedule: If the screening candidate is comfortable, ensure that she is scheduled for a mammogram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Can I help you make an appointment to get a mammogram?”
<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"> • “It’s okay if you aren’t ready to make an appointment today. • Would it be okay if I check in with you in a couple of months?” <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.

Addressing Screening Barriers

Healthcare providers should always use their professional medical judgment.

Women may have various reasons why they have not been screened for breast cancer. Below, you will find some common barriers 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.

Barrier 1

*I feel healthy.
I haven't ever felt a lump.
I do self-exams at home.*

Barrier 2

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

Barrier 3

I don't have insurance coverage or know if my insurance will cover the screening.

Barrier 4

I am uncomfortable with exposing my body to others.

Barrier 5

I am afraid of getting a positive result from the screening.

Barrier 6

I don't understand the mammography screening process.

BARRIER/CONCERN	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Barrier 1: <i>I feel healthy. I haven't ever felt a lump. I do self-exams at home.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It's important to get screened. You can have breast cancer and not feel it at all!" • According to the American Cancer Society, screening tests like mammograms can help find breast cancer before you experience symptoms or feel a lump."¹
<p>Barrier 2: <i>I don't know if I have a family history of breast cancer.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "All women are at risk for breast cancer."⁴ • In about 85% of breast cancer cases, there is no family history of the disease."³ • Breast cancer is now the most common cancer diagnosed in South Asian women."²
<p>Barrier 3: <i>I don't have insurance coverage or know if my insurance will cover the screening.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Many health plans cover the full cost of annual screening mammograms for women 40 and older with no copay or no deductible."⁴ • You should contact your insurer to understand your coverage."
<p>Barrier 4: <i>I am uncomfortable with exposing my body to others.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Screenings are done safely in a private setting. • Technicians are trained, certified, and are typically women. • Mammograms typically take just 15 to 30 minutes."⁵
<p>Barrier 5: <i>I am afraid of getting a positive result from the screening.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Early diagnosis for Asian and Pacific Islander women leads to better survival rates."²
<p>Barrier 6: <i>I don't understand the mammography screening process.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Mammograms are the best screening tests we have to detect breast cancer."⁶ • According to the American Cancer Society, mammography will find about 85% of breast cancers."⁶ • A mammogram is a type of x-ray."⁶ • The screenings typically take 15 to 30 minutes."⁵ • The American Cancer Society confirms that the benefits of a mammogram are greater than any harm from the radiation exposure."⁷ • Of course, if you have specific concerns, you should talk to your doctor."

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

Breast Cancer/Screening Information

Question 1: *What is breast cancer?* (See page 5)

Question 2: *How serious is breast cancer?* (See page 5)

Question 3: *Why should I be screened for breast cancer?* (See page 5)

Question 4: *How do you screen for breast cancer?* (See page 5)

About the Mammogram

Question 5: *What is a mammogram?* (See page 6)

Question 6: *Who performs a mammogram?* (See page 6)

Question 7: *How long does a mammogram take?* (See page 6)

Question 8: *Is a mammogram safe?* (See page 6)

Question 9: *Is a mammogram painful?* (See page 6)

Question 10: *Can I get a mammogram if I have breast implants?* (See page 6)

Question 11: *What are other options for breast cancer screening besides mammograms?* (See page 7)

Cost/Logistics

Question 12: *How much does a mammogram cost?* (See page 7)

Question 13: *Do I have to pay for office visits when I see my doctor for breast cancer screening?* (See page 7)

Question 14: *Do you have transportation available to help me go get my mammogram?* (See page 7)

Frequently Asked Questions (Breast Cancer/Screening Information)

QUESTION	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Question 1: <i>What is breast cancer?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Breast cancer is a disease in which some cells in the breast grow out of control.”⁸ • Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women of South Asian origin.² • Breast cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death among women.³ • Regular mammograms can help detect breast cancer early.”¹
<p>Question 2: <i>How serious is breast cancer?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Breast cancer is a very serious cancer for women. • Breast cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death among women.³ • On average, every 2 minutes a woman in the U.S. is diagnosed with breast cancer.⁹ • One in 8 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime.³ • On average, one woman dies from breast cancer every 12 minutes in the U.S.⁴ • According to the American Cancer Society, regular screening is the most reliable way to catch breast cancer early.”¹
<p>Question 3: <i>Why should I be screened for breast cancer?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Even if you haven’t felt a lump, screening is important.”¹ <p><i>Clarify: “Have you had a mammogram this calendar year?”</i></p> <p>[If yes, report the results to her doctor to determine if she needs to be reassessed and follow up with her.]</p> <p>[If no, continue below.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The American Cancer Society recommends women aged 45 and older should have regular mammograms.¹ <p>—<i>They also recommend women aged 40 to 44 should have an option to start annual mammograms. Women with a higher risk of breast cancer may need to begin screenings earlier. Recommendations from other health organizations vary.</i></p> <p>—<i>Talk with your doctor about what is right for you.”</i></p>
<p>Question 4: <i>How do you screen for breast cancer?</i></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.¹ • A mammogram uses X-rays to create images of the breast. A doctor will then look at the X-ray images to see if there are signs of cancer.⁷ • You can have breast cancer and not feel it at all.”¹

Frequently Asked Questions (About the Mammogram)

QUESTION	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Question 5: <i>What is a mammogram?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast.⁷ During a mammogram, the breast is pressed between 2 plates of glass while X-rays are used to take pictures of the breast.⁷ • This test may find tumors that are too small to feel.”¹
<p>Question 6: <i>Who performs a mammogram?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “An X-ray technician performs the mammogram. • The mammogram is performed in a private room and the technician will try to make you feel as comfortable as possible. The technician may need to position your breasts in the machine in order to get the screening done appropriately, but the technician will do so respectfully. • Technicians are typically women.”
<p>Question 7: <i>How long does a mammogram take?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It usually takes around 15 to 30 minutes to complete a mammogram of both breasts.⁵ 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.”
<p>Question 8: <i>Is a mammogram safe?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “According to the American Cancer Society, 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.^{7,10} • According to the American Cancer Society, the amount of radiation used during a mammogram is about the same as you would get in about 7 weeks of your everyday life.⁷ • The American Cancer Society confirms that the benefits of a mammogram are greater than any harm from the radiation exposure.⁷ • However, if you might be pregnant, let your healthcare provider and X-ray technician know. Screening mammograms aren’t routinely done in pregnant women.”⁷
<p>Question 9: <i>Can I get a mammogram if I have breast implants?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yes, you should still get a mammogram even if you have breast implants.¹¹ • 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.¹¹ • There are easy ways the doctor can make adjustments to allow for a better image.¹¹ • Doctors may take extra pictures to see more of your breast around the implants.”¹¹
<p>Question 10: <i>What are other options for breast cancer screening besides mammograms?</i></p>	

Frequently Asked Questions (Cost/Logistics)

QUESTION	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Question 11: <i>How much does a mammogram cost?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If you have private insurance, a screening mammogram may be covered without the need for a copayment.”⁴ <p>[If insurance coverage is unknown]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We suggest calling your insurance plan to check your coverage. • There are nationwide programs that may assist with part or all of the cost of screenings, if you qualify.”¹²⁻¹⁴
<p>Question 12: <i>Do I have to pay for office visits when I see my doctor for breast cancer screening?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There may be a copay for the office visit.”⁵
<p>Question 13: <i>Can I bring a friend or family member with me?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Of course. Your guest can wait for you in another room, or outside if required, during the actual exam.”
<p>Question 14: <i>Do you have transportation available to help me go get my mammogram?</i></p>	

References: **1.** American Cancer Society recommendations for the early detection of breast cancer. American Cancer Society website. Last revised January 14, 2022. Accessed March 16, 2023. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screeningtests-and-early-detection/american-cancer-society-recommendations-for-the-early-detection-of-breast-cancer.html> **2.** Cancer incidence and 5-year survival among Asian/Pacific Islander people, United States—2008-2017. CDC website. Accessed March 16, 2023. https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/uscs/about/data-briefs/no22-cancer-incidence-survival-Asian-Pacific-Islanders-2008-2017.htm?s_cid=qr2022 **3.** U.S. breast cancer statistics. Breastcancer.org. Last modified January 18, 2023. Accessed March 16, 2023. http://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/understand_bc/statistics **4.** Breast cancer statistics. Susan G. Komen website. Updated January 24, 2023. Accessed March 16, 2023. <https://www.komen.org/breast-cancer/facts-statistics/breast-cancer-statistics> **5.** Learn about mammograms. SisterPact website. Accessed March 16, 2023. <http://www.sisterpact.com/learn/#> **6.** Limitations of mammograms. American Cancer Society website. Last revised January 14, 2022. Accessed March 16, 2023. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/mammograms/limitations-of-mammograms.html> **7.** Mammogram basics. American Cancer Society website. Last revised January 14, 2022. Accessed March 16, 2023. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/mammograms/mammogram-basics.html> **8.** What is breast cancer? Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. Last revised September 26, 2022. Accessed March 16, 2023. https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/what-is-breast-cancer.htm **9.** Breast Cancer Fact Sheet. Susan G. Komen website. Published January 2023. Accessed March 16, 2023. <https://www.komen.org/wp-content/uploads/BCFactSheetOct2017-1.pdf> **10.** Radiation is a part of our world. American Nuclear Society website. Last modified February 3, 2023. Accessed March 16, 2023. https://www.ans.org/file/1090/2/radiation_dose_chart.pdf **11.** Mammograms for women with breast implants. American Cancer Society website. Last revised January 14, 2022. Accessed March 16, 2023. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/mammograms/mammograms-for-women-with-breast-implants.html> **12.** National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. American Cancer Society website. Last revised December 5, 2022. Accessed March 14, 2023. <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/finding-and-paying-for-treatment/understanding-health-insurance/government-funded-programs/nbccedp.html> **13.** Mammography. Susan G. Komen website. Last revised November 30, 2022. Accessed March 14, 2023. <https://www.komen.org/breast-cancer/screening/mammography/#freemammogram> **14.** Mammograms. Medicare website. Accessed March 14, 2023. <https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/mammograms>

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