

Breast Cancer Screening Navigation Script for the Black Community

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 Black people, 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 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 candidates and advise them to consult their healthcare providers for all medical advice or questions.

Please keep in mind individual 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 the worry or question to ensure that you are addressing the concerns.

2 Empathize

Acknowledge the question/concern is valid and express empathy. (It is important to build trust and engage in a dialogue.)

3 Respond

Respond to the 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 questions and concerns have been addressed, check if a mammogram appointment has been scheduled. If not, ask if you can assist by scheduling a mammogram appointment at this time. If there are concerns, a follow-up may be required at a later time.

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 [Your Name]. 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 patient’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 the 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. Help address any barriers to screening with these sample statements.</p> <p>Note: Sharing personal stories may help the individual 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>“Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Black women.²</i> —<i>Did you know Black women are 2x more likely to develop triple-negative or inflammatory breast cancers, which are more aggressive and difficult to treat?²</i> • <i>You are still at risk for breast cancer, even if you do not feel a lump or have a family history of breast cancer.”³</i> <p>[Consider sharing a personal story about the importance of breast cancer screening to help connect. 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, screening tests like mammograms can help find breast cancer before you experience symptoms or feel a lump.¹</i> • <i>Mammograms can help detect breast cancer early.”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.

Addressing Screening Barriers

Healthcare providers should always use their professional medical judgment.

People 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 person you're speaking with. Consider sharing a personal story to increase receptivity to your message.

Barrier 1: Self-exams

I perform self-exams; why do I need a mammogram?

Barrier 4: How often?

I didn't know I needed a mammogram every year.

Barrier 7: Radiation concerns

Doesn't a mammogram use radiation; is it safe?

Barrier 2: No lumps or discomfort

I've never felt a lump, or have pain or discomfort.

Barrier 5: Too busy

I don't have enough time to schedule a mammogram.

Barrier 8: Fear or anxiety

Talking about my breasts makes me feel funny; I get anxious thinking about breast cancer and mammography.

Barrier 3: No family history

No one in my family has ever had breast cancer. Do I really need a mammogram?

Barrier 6: How expensive is it?

I don't know if mammograms are covered under my insurance; how expensive is it?

Barrier 9: Is it painful?

I've heard mammograms are painful.

BARRIER/CONCERN	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
Barrier 1: Self-exams <i>I perform self-exams; why do I need a mammogram?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Checking for breast cancer at home is important. • Mammograms can help find breast cancer even if you can't feel a lump.¹ • Black women are more likely to have dense breast tissue, so it may be difficult to feel lumps during self-exams.^{1,4} • 3D mammography may be helpful in women with dense breast tissue.¹ • In recent years, a newer type of mammogram called digital breast tomosynthesis (commonly known as three-dimensional [3D] mammography) has become much more common, although it's not available in all breast imaging centers. Many studies have found that 3D mammography appears to lower the chance of being called back for follow-up testing. It also appears to find more breast cancers, and several studies have shown it can be helpful in women with more dense breasts.¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —Talk with your doctor about what is right for you, so that you can benefit from early detection. • According to the American Cancer Society, regular screening is the most reliable way to catch breast cancer early.¹ • 99% of women who get diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer (when cancer is only in the breast) are alive 5 years after their diagnosis.^{5,6} • If you have concerns about getting a mammogram, you should talk with your doctor."

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.

Addressing Barriers (continued)

BARRIER/CONCERN	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Barrier 2: No lumps or discomfort I've never felt a lump, or have pain or discomfort.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Black women are more likely to have dense breast tissue, so it may be difficult to feel lumps during self-exams.^{1,4} • Black women are at higher risk of developing triple-negative or inflammatory breast cancer, which are more aggressive cancers that are challenging to treat.² • You can have breast cancer and not feel it at all.¹ • Mammograms can help detect cancer early."¹
<p>Barrier 3: No family history No one in my family has ever had breast cancer. Do I really need a mammogram?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "There are some common myths, but all women are at risk for breast cancer.³ • In about 85% of breast cancer cases, there is no family history of the disease.⁷
<p>Barrier 4: How often? I didn't know I needed a mammogram every year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It's important to get screened. You can have breast cancer and not feel it at all.¹ — There is a lot of different advice about when to get your breast cancer screening.¹ • The American College of Radiology notes that all women, especially Black women, should be evaluated for breast cancer risk no later than age 30, so that those at a higher risk can be identified and can benefit from screening.⁸ — Talk with your doctor about what is right for you, so that you can benefit from early detection."
<p>Barrier 5: Too busy I don't have enough time to schedule a mammogram.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I understand that you are busy but we can be flexible about when you get scheduled. Do you have a calendar handy, I can stay on the line and help you, if you'd like?" <p>[Help screening candidates schedule their mammograms when possible.]</p>
<p>Barrier 6: How expensive is it? I don't know if mammograms are covered under my insurance; how expensive is it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Getting a mammogram may not cost a lot. — Your insurance may cover your screening; contact your insurer to check coverage today.⁹

Addressing Barriers (continued)

BARRIER/CONCERN	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Barrier 7: Radiation concerns Doesn't a mammogram use radiation; is it safe?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Just like any other medical procedure, it's wise to understand any risks that may affect you.</i> • <i>I understand your concerns. According to the American Cancer Society, most people in the United States are normally exposed to a little radiation in their everyday life. Radiation comes from natural sources, like the sun, water, food, and air.</i>^{10,11} • <i>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.</i>¹⁰ • <i>The American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute say 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.</i>^{10,12}
<p>Barrier 8: Fear or anxiety Talking about my breasts makes me feel funny; I get anxious thinking about breast cancer and mammography.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"I understand. It's common to be scared about breast cancer. But, it's important to get screened.</i> • <i>Many years of research show that women who get regularly screened for breast cancer are more likely to detect breast cancer early and, therefore, may be more likely to avoid extensive types of treatments.</i>¹ • <i>99% of women who get diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer (when cancer is only in the breast) are alive 5 years after their diagnosis.</i>^{5,6}
<p>Barrier 9: Is it painful? I've heard mammograms are painful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"You may experience a little discomfort during the mammogram. If you do, let the technician know so they can try to make you feel more comfortable.</i> • <i>The test itself usually takes about 30 minutes.</i>⁹

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 7)*

Question 2: *How serious is breast cancer? (See page 7)*

Question 3: *Why should I be screened for breast cancer? (See page 7)*

Question 4: *How do you screen for breast cancer? (See page 7)*

About the Mammogram

Question 5: *What is a mammogram? (See page 8)*

Question 6: *Who performs a mammogram? (See page 8)*

Question 7: *How long does a mammogram take? (See page 8)*

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

Question 9: *Is a mammogram painful? (See page 8)*

Question 10: *Can I get a mammogram if I have breast implants? (See page 9)*

Question 11: *What are other options for breast cancer screening besides mammograms? (See page 9)*

Cost/Logistics

Question 12: *How much does a mammogram cost? (See page 10)*

Question 13: *Do I have to pay for office visits when I see my doctor for breast cancer screening? (See page 10)*

Question 14: *Do you have transportation available to help me go get my mammogram? (See page 10)*

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.

Frequently Asked Questions (Breast Cancer/Screening Information)

QUESTION	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Question 1: What is breast cancer?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Breast cancer is a disease in which some cells in the breast grow out of control.”¹³ • Breast cancer is the second most common cancer in women after skin cancer.¹⁴ • Regular mammograms can help detect breast cancer early.”¹
<p>Question 2: How serious is breast cancer?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Black women.”² • Black women are at higher risk of developing triple-negative or inflammatory breast cancer, which are more aggressive cancers that are challenging to treat.² • Black women are more likely to have dense breast tissue than other women, which is associated with increased risk for breast cancer.^{1,4,15} • One in 8 women in the United States will develop breast cancer in her lifetime.⁷ • According to the American Cancer Society, regular screening is the most reliable way to catch breast cancer early.”¹
<p>Question 3: Why should I be screened for breast cancer?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Even if you haven’t felt a lump, screening is important.”¹ <p>Clarify: “Have you had a mammogram this calendar year?”</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 College of Radiology notes that all women, especially Black women, should be evaluated for breast cancer risk no later than age 30, so that those at a higher risk can be identified and can benefit from screening.”⁸ <p>—Talk with your doctor about what is right for you.”</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.”¹⁰ • 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.¹⁰ • There are 2 types of mammograms, 2D and 3D mammography. The technique for performing them is the same.¹⁰ • In recent years, a newer type of mammogram called digital breast tomosynthesis (commonly known as three-dimensional [3D] mammography) has become much more common, although it’s not available in all breast imaging centers. Many studies have found that 3D mammography appears to lower the chance of being called back for follow-up testing. It also appears to find more breast cancers, and several studies have shown it can be helpful in women with more dense breasts.¹ • Black women are more likely to have dense breast tissue than other women, which is associated with increased risk for breast cancer.^{1,4,15}

Frequently Asked Questions (About the Mammogram)

QUESTION	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Question 5: What is a mammogram?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast.¹⁰ 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.¹² • Mammograms can help find breast cancer even if you can’t feel a lump. Black women are more likely to have dense breast tissue, so it may be difficult to feel lumps during self-exams.”^{1,4}
<p>Question 6: Who performs a mammogram?</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. • If you prefer a female technician, you can let the office know when you arrive.”
<p>Question 7: 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 spent in the waiting room. Your provider should be able to give you a better estimate of total time.”⁹
<p>Question 8: Is a mammogram safe?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “According to the American Cancer Society, most people in the United States are normally exposed to a little radiation in their everyday life. Radiation comes from natural sources, like the sun, water, food, and air.”^{10,11} • 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.¹⁰ • 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.^{10,12} • However, if you might be pregnant, let your healthcare provider and X-ray technologist know. Screening mammograms aren’t routinely done in pregnant women.”¹⁰
<p>Question 9: Is a mammogram painful?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You may experience a little discomfort during the mammogram. If you do, let the technician know so they can try to make you feel more comfortable. • The test itself usually takes about 30 minutes.”⁹

Frequently Asked Questions (About the Mammogram, continued)

QUESTION	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Question 10: <i>Can I get a mammogram if I have breast implants?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“Yes, you should still get a mammogram even if you have breast implants.”¹⁶</i>• <i>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.¹⁶</i>• <i>There are ways the doctor can make adjustments to allow for a better image.¹⁶</i>• <i>Doctors may take extra pictures to see more of your breast around the implants.”¹⁶</i>
<p>Question 11: <i>What are other options for breast cancer screening besides mammograms?</i></p>	

Frequently Asked Questions (Cost/Logistics)

QUESTION	EXAMPLE RESPONSES
<p>Question 12: How much does a mammogram cost?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly all insurance companies, as well as Medicare and Medicaid, cover the entire mammogram cost for women aged 40 and over.¹⁷ Did you know that since 2010, the Affordable Care Act has required that annual screening mammograms for women over the age of 40 be covered with no copay or deductible?¹⁷ For women without insurance, there are programs such as the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program, chapters of the YWCA, and affiliates of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation that can often provide a free mammogram.¹⁷ <p>If insurance coverage is unknown: “We suggest calling your insurance plan to check your coverage.”</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 copay for the office visit.”⁹ We suggest calling your insurance plan to check your coverage.”
<p>Question 14: Do you have transportation available to help me go get my mammogram?</p>	

References: **1.** American Cancer Society recommendations for the early detection of breast cancer. American Cancer Society. Last revised January 14, 2022. Accessed May 24, 2022. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/american-cancer-society-recommendations-for-the-early-detection-of-breast-cancer.html> **2.** Giaquinto AN, Miller KD, Tossas KY, et al. Cancer statistics for African American/Black people 2022. *CA Cancer J Clin.* 2022;72(3):202-229. **3.** Breast cancer statistics. Susan G. Komen. Last revised March 9, 2022. Accessed May 24, 2022. <https://www.komen.org/breast-cancer/facts-statistics/breast-cancer-statistics> **4.** McCarthy AM, Keller MB, Pantalone LM, et al. Racial differences in quantitative measures of area and volumetric breast density. *J Natl Cancer Inst.* 2016;108(10):djw104. doi:10.1093/jnci/djw104. **5.** American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts & Figures 2022.* Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2022. Accessed May 24, 2022. <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2022/cancer-facts-and-statistics/2022/cancer-facts-and-figures-2022.pdf> **6.** SEER Cancer Stat Facts: Female breast cancer. National Cancer Institute. Accessed May 24, 2022. <https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/breast.html> **7.** U.S. breast cancer statistics. Breastcancer.org. Last revised March 10, 2022. Accessed May 24, 2022. http://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/understand_bc/statistics **8.** Monticciolo D, Newell MS, Moy L, et al. Breast cancer screening in women at higher-than-average risk: recommendations from the ACR. *J Am Coll Radiol.* 2018;15(3 Pt A):408-414. **9.** Learn about mammograms. SisterPact. Accessed May 24, 2022. <http://www.sisterpact.com/learn/#> **10.** Mammogram basics. American Cancer Society. Last revised January 14, 2022. Accessed May 24, 2022. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/mammograms/mammogram-basics.html> **11.** Radiation is a part of our world. American Nuclear Society. Published October 2015. Accessed May 24, 2022. https://www.ans.org/file/1090/2/radiation_dose_chart.pdf **12.** Mammograms. National Cancer Institute. Accessed May 24, 2022. <https://www.cancer.gov/types/breast/mammograms-fact-sheet> **13.** What is breast cancer? Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Last reviewed September 22, 2021. Accessed May 24, 2022. https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/what-is-breast-cancer.htm **14.** Breast cancer—patient version. National Cancer Institute. Accessed May 24, 2022. <https://www.cancer.gov/types/breast> **15.** Rochman S. Study finds black women have denser breast tissue than white women. *J Natl Cancer Inst.* 2015;107(10):djv296. **16.** Mammograms for women with breast implants. American Cancer Society. Last revised January 14, 2022. Accessed May 24, 2022. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/screening-tests-and-early-detection/mammograms/mammograms-for-women-with-breast-implants.html> **17.** Know your screening options. Brem Foundation to Defeat Breast Cancer. Accessed May 24, 2022. <https://www.bremfoundation.org/screening-options>

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