Thyroid shielding

The aim of this leaflet is to help answer some of the questions you have about the use of a thyroid shield during a mammogram examination. If you have any queries or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is thyroid shielding?
The thyroid gland is in your neck and affects growth and development. A thyroid shield is a small covered piece of leaded vinyl worn around the neck to protect the thyroid from radiation exposure. Personal shielding is worn by some members of staff or patients during some medical imaging scans, to decrease the amount of radiation to the thyroid gland.

Why is a thyroid shield not required for a mammogram?
During a mammogram, the thyroid is not exposed to the direct X-ray beam. Only the breast being examined will receive an intentional dose of radiation during the X-ray.

Wearing a thyroid shield during a mammogram might interfere with your position and hide your breast on the X-ray. This can mean that the image is not as helpful to the doctors, and you might need to have the mammogram repeated. This would mean an unnecessary increase in radiation to your breast. This would be a bigger risk than if you didn’t wear a thyroid shield at all, and could also cause you more worry and stress.

Mammography machines are designed to make sure you are safe. They have radiation shields inside, which stop stray radiation.

Pregnant patients
Any radiation to the uterus is so low that it is unmeasurable, so wearing a shield to cover your abdomen (tummy) is not necessary.

Consent – asking for your consent
We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

Are there any alternatives?
We do not recommend thyroid shielding during a mammogram.

If you have any further questions, you can speak to a medical physics expert in radiation safety, t: 020 7188 3808, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.
Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns before your appointment, please contact one of the mammographers in the Breast Imaging Unit, t: 020 7188 5574 or one of the breast care nurses, t: 020 7188 0869, both Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

If you have any questions or problems after your appointment, please contact the Breast Clinic, t: 020 7188 1483 or the mammogram secretary, t: 020 7188 4246, both Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline
If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.
  t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns
For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.
  t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS)  e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk
  t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)  e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services
If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.
  t: 020 7188 8815  e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111
Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.
  t: 111

NHS Choices
Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.
  w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust
Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.
  t: 0800 731 0319  e: members@gstt.nhs.uk
  w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership