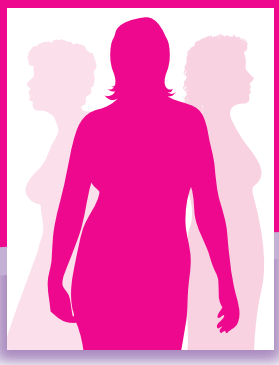
BreastScreen WA
Information for GPs:
Breast screening guidelines for women exposed to diethylstilboestrol



Fact Sheet 13

Diethylstilbestrol (DES) is a synthetic oestrogen that was prescribed to pregnant women between about 1940 and 1971 because it was thought to prevent miscarriages.[1]

In the early 70s a connection was established between in utero DES exposure and the development of a rare form of adenocarcinoma of the vagina and cervix (clear cell adenocarcinoma) in the daughters of women who had taken DES during pregnancy.[2] In 1971, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a warning against the use of DES in pregnant women.[3] DES continued to be used in various European countries until the early 1980s.

Women who were exposed to DES in utero may have structural reproductive tract anomalies, an increased infertility rate, and poor pregnancy outcomes.[1] The majority of women who took DES and their children do not have any adverse effects from exposure to the drug.

Two studies identified in the literature review for the BreastScreen Australia Evaluation Report 2009 examined the relative risk for developing breast cancer for women exposed to DES in utero.[4] One study reported a relative risk of 2 [5], while the second found that the relative risk ranges from 1.25–1.99 [6]. These findings indicate that women who were exposed to DES in utero may have a slightly increased risk of breast cancer, but the level of risk is similar to exposure to a range of other risk factors that would not generally require more intensive screening protocols.

	Adverse effects	Recommendations
Women with a history of exposure to DES (mothers and daughters)	May have a slightly higher risk of breast cancer than the general population and therefore should be encouraged to have regular mammography.	Regular 2 yearly screening mammograms

References

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4. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. Evaluation of the BreastScreen Australia Program – Evaluation Final Report – June 2009. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia 2009. Available from <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/screening/publishing.nsf/Content/8463830B90E5BDF5CA25762A000193C6/$File/Breastscreen%20Aust_REPORT.pdf>
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