



Jackson County Department of Public Health

Anna Lippard
Deputy Health Director
828-587-8225

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October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

The Jackson County Department of Public Health recognizes October as Breast Cancer Awareness month. Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer for women in the United States, apart from skin cancer. Breast Cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in all women. The NC State Center for Health Statistics projects that in 2023, more than 12,102 women in North Carolina will be diagnosed with breast cancer, and over 1,544 will die from this disease. Additionally, for Jackson County it is projected that 47 new women will be diagnosed with breast cancer, and 7 will die from this disease.

Mammograms are the most effective screening tool to detect breast cancer early when it is easier to treat. Mammograms are X-ray pictures of your breasts that doctors use to look for early signs of breast cancer. Regular mammograms (also known as screening mammograms) can help doctors find breast cancer early, sometimes up to three years before it can be felt. Medicare, Medicaid, and most private insurance companies cover screening mammograms as part of routine preventive care. If you are uninsured or underinsured, you may qualify for a free mammogram through the North Carolina Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (NC BCCCP). NC BCCCP provides free or low-cost breast and cervical cancer screenings and follow-up to eligible women. NC BCCCP services are provided at the Jackson County Department of Public Health. Call 828-587-8213 to see if you qualify and schedule your mammogram.

Even with regular screening mammograms, it is important to talk to your doctor about your risk factors for developing breast cancer. The main risk factors for developing breast cancer include being a woman, being older (most breast cancers are found in women who are age 40 and up) and having changes in your BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene. The good news is that there are several things you can do to help lower your risk of developing breast cancer.

- Keep a healthy weight and exercise regularly
- Don't drink alcohol or limit the amount of alcohol you do drink
- If you are taking hormone replacement therapy or birth control pills, ask your doctor about the risks
- Breastfeed your baby/babies, if possible
- If you have a family history of breast cancer or inherited changes in your BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, talk to your doctor about other ways to lower your risk.

Talk with your doctor about your risk factors and they can help you decide how often to get a screening mammogram. For more information about NC BCCCP visit <https://bcccp.dph.ncdhhs.gov/>. For more information about NC BCCCP services at the Jackson



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County Department of Public Health or to schedule a mammogram, call Chanta Ashe at 828-587-8213.

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