

# Do you need breast cancer screening services?

## *What you should know:*

Breast cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths for women in North Carolina. Each year, thousands of North Carolina women are diagnosed with breast cancer and some die from the disease. Women in North Carolina have a 1-in-8 lifetime risk of developing breast cancer.

It is important for women of all races and ethnicities to be screened for breast cancer. White women are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer than are women of any other race or ethnicity. However, African American women are more likely to die of this disease, due to late detection and more aggressive breast cancers.

The goal of screening exams for early breast cancer detection is to find cancers before they start to cause symptoms. Annual clinical breast exams and mammograms are important methods of finding breast cancer in its earliest, most treatable stage. Monthly breast self exam can also be a useful tool for women to find changes in their breasts early. Early detection of breast cancer can save lives.



The N.C. Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP) offers free or low-cost breast cancer screenings and follow-up to eligible women in North Carolina.

## **Who is eligible for BCCCP?**

Women aged 40-64 who:

- have a household income below 250 percent of the federal poverty level;
- are uninsured or underinsured; and
- are without Medicare Part B or Medicaid.

Women are eligible for breast cancer screenings if they meet all of the above criteria.

## **What services are available?**

- Clinical breast exams
- Mammograms (if age appropriate)
- Diagnostic procedures, as indicated

## **What are you waiting for?**

To find a local BCCCP provider near you, call **919-707-5300**.

## **Risk factors for breast cancer**

Gender — simply being female

Age 50 or older

Under age 12 at onset of menstrual periods

Over age 50 at onset of menopause

Over age 30 when first giving birth

Never having given birth

Personal or family history of breast cancer

Being overweight

Genetic predisposition, such as certain mutations in BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes

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## Symptoms

Early breast cancer usually does not cause pain. In fact, when breast cancer first develops, there may be no symptoms at all. But as the cancer grows, it can cause changes that women should watch for:

- A lump or thickening in or near the breast or in the underarm area—50 percent of such masses are found in the upper outer quarter of the breast.
- A change in the size or shape of the breast.
- An abnormal discharge from the nipple.
- A change in the color, feel, or texture of the skin of the breast, areola, or nipple (dimpled, puckered, or scaly).

## What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast. It is used to study normal and abnormal structures within the breasts. A screening mammogram is used to look for breast disease in women who do not have symptoms. A diagnostic mammogram is used to diagnose or rule out breast disease in women who do have breast symptoms.

During a mammogram, you must undress above the waist. You and the technologist are the only ones present during the mammogram. The breast is compressed between two plates, which flatten and spread the tissue. The compression only lasts a few seconds, and the entire procedure for screening mammography takes about 20 minutes. The x-rays are developed and examined by a radiologist.

Consult your physician to determine when mammography screenings should begin, based on your own health history.

## What if my results are abnormal?

If a mammogram detects a suspicious area, you may be advised to have further mammograms or an ultrasound, to see a specialist, or to have a biopsy. About 10 percent of women who have a mammogram will require more tests, and most of them need only an additional mammogram.

*For more information about N.C. BCCCP, please call 919.707.5300.*

## Additional Resources

### American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org  
800.227.2345 or  
TTY 866.228.4327

### National Women's Health Information Center

www.4woman.gov/breastcancer  
800.994.9662 or  
TDD 888.220.5446

### Susan G. Komen for the Cure

www.komen.org  
877.465.6636

### National Cancer Institute

www.cancer.gov/cancer\_information/cancer\_type/breast  
800.422.6237 or  
TTY 800.332.8615

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast

### N.C. Comprehensive Cancer Program

919.707.5300

## References

*Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2011-2012.*

<http://www.cancer.org/acs/groups/content/@epidemiologysurveillance/documents/document/acspc-030975.pdf>

