

October is **Breast Cancer Awareness** Month

Below are six things you should know for breast cancer awareness:

1) Know Your Family History.

Do you have any close family members, such as a mother, sister, daughter or father, who had or has breast cancer? Let your health-care provider know; more frequent mammograms or other testing may be appropriate.

2) Be Aware.

As you age, your risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer increases, so be aware of sudden changes you see or feel in your breasts and nipples and let your health-care provider know about them. Also, having routine mammograms becomes even more important as you age.

3) Get Screened.

Mammograms are the best tests doctors currently have to find breast cancer early. Catching breast cancer early is important, so talk to your health-care provider about when you should start being tested, and how often.

4) Keep Yourself Healthy.

Regular exercise and a healthy, low-fat diet are associated with a lower risk for breast and some other cancers, so stay on course with your exercise routine and good eating habits. Also, limit your alcohol consumption to one drink or less per day. Increased alcohol consumption has been associated with an increased risk of developing breast cancer.

5) It's Not All Bad News.

If you have a mammogram that shows abnormal results, and you need additional tests, most often it will not be cancer. In fact, most changes in your breasts or nipples are not cancer. Nonetheless, it is important to share information about any changes you see or feel with your health-care provider.

6) Progress Is Being Made.

According to the most recent data from the National Cancer Institute, death rates for breast cancer continue to decline. The rate of newly diagnosed cancer cases is also decreasing. Both of these facts appear to be good indicators that we are making progress toward a more hopeful future for those affected by the disease. Today there are about 5,000 breast cancer survivors in North Dakota.

This information is brought to you by the North Dakota Department of Health and its partners:

