Maybe you’ve had several mammograms over the years. Or maybe you’re about to have your first. Either way, it’s good to remember: Screenings for breast cancer are an important part of your health care.

That’s because a mammogram can uncover a problem long before you might find it and long before you might have any symptoms.

**Mammograms are part of your benefits**

Here’s some more good news: Regular screening mammograms are part of your preventive benefits from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC). 3-D mammograms are also covered. If you have dense breasts, your doctor may want you to have a 3-D mammogram, which provides a clearer image of dense breast tissue.

**Why get a mammogram?**

It’s a simple fact: Research has shown that having regular mammograms can lower your risk of dying from breast cancer. Of course, a mammogram doesn’t prevent or cure breast cancer. But it can help you and your doctor find breast cancer early, when it’s easier to treat.

**What about family history?**

Most women – about eight out of ten – who get breast cancer do not have a family history of the disease.

But you should know that having a mother, sister or daughter with breast cancer almost doubles a woman’s risk. Having two first-degree relatives (such as having a mother and a sister with breast cancer) increases the risk by about three times. And whether there’s breast cancer in your family or not, your risk of breast cancer increases with age.

**Overall, fewer than 15% of women with breast cancer have a family member with the disease.** So, no matter what your family history, you owe it to yourself to get regular mammograms. Talk with your doctor about what’s best for you.

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Learn more online

**American Cancer Society**
www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast

**National Cancer Institute**
www.cancer.gov/types/breast
Are mammograms safe?
The benefits of mammograms outweigh any possible harm. Mammograms expose your breasts to small amounts of radiation. According to the American Cancer Society, the dose of radiation used in a screening of both breasts is about the same as the amount of radiation you’d be exposed to in your natural surroundings over about seven weeks.4

Some things you should know
Most women have no pain when they have a mammogram. But you may want to avoid having a mammogram during your period when your breasts may be more tender.

Between mammograms, be aware of any changes in your breasts. If you have any of the following, talk with your doctor right away:

- A new lump in the breast or armpit
- Swelling in part of the breast
- Pain in the breast or nipple area
- A change in the size or shape of the breast
- Redness or flaky skin on your breast or around the nipple area
- Irritation or dimpling of the breast skin
- Any discharge other than breast milk

Learn more
Nearly one of every eight women in the United States will develop breast cancer at some point in their lives. That also means seven of eight women won’t develop breast cancer. To learn more about mammograms and breast health, talk with your doctor and check out the websites noted on the previous page.