

CLINIC UPDATE

October 20, 2021

October is an important month for taking care of your health. Read more to learn how you can help yourself and those around you stay healthy this fall.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Learn why you should still schedule your breast cancer screening during COVID.

Breast cancer screenings and diagnoses have decreased by up to 51% across the US in the last year, according to a recent study. At Island Hospital, screenings are down by a less staggering number, at just 25%. But even this percentage drop requires attention and discussion.

There are a few explanations for this, and not surprisingly, COVID-19 is one central reason why women have been postponing scheduling a mammogram over the last year. At the beginning of the pandemic, many non-essential procedures were postponed, in order to reserve medical resources and limit infections of COVID-19.

However, breast cancer screenings are still just as important at this time, especially with research supporting such a drastic decrease over the last year. “While residents have taken to social distancing, cancer does not pause,” the researchers said. “The delay in diagnosis will likely lead to presentation at more advanced stages and poorer clinical outcomes. One study suggests a potential increase of 33,890 excessive cancer deaths in the United States.”

What this means for you

If you have been putting off getting a mammogram this past year, first of all, know that you are not alone. But regular screenings for breast cancer, including mammograms and breast exams by your physician, are incredibly important now. Early detection is crucial with breast cancer, and can often result in better prognosis and treatment plan options.

Recommended ages for breast exams and mammograms:

- **Women age 20-39:** Clinical breast exam during annual exam, and regular breast self-exams.
- **Women age 40 and over:** Annual mammogram starting at age 40; Clinical breast exam during annual exam, and regular breast self-exams.

Mammograms and the COVID-19 vaccine

While many experts recommend that you wait four to six weeks to have a regular screening mammogram after your COVID-19 vaccination, please remember that if you have any particular concerns, you still ought to speak with your physician as soon as possible. Together with your provider, you can make an educated decision regarding when you should schedule your mammogram. Although there may be additional swelling in the lymph nodes after a COVID-19 vaccination, it is still possible to have a screening, if you and your provider decide it is prudent to do so sooner rather than later. If you have received your vaccination four to six weeks ago, we recommend scheduling your screening now, if together with your provider you decide it is the right time for you to do so. We hope that this

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information will encourage you to not delay or push back your screenings any longer due to concerns about COVID-19.

Island Hospital makes it easy to schedule your mammogram screening, even offering evening and weekend appointments for expanded availability. If you have any concerns or would like to discuss your risk factors and when you should start screenings for breast cancer, please don't hesitate to schedule an appointment with your provider.

For screening mammogram appointments call 360-299-4288. If you need help finding a provider, please call (360) 293-3101.

COVID-19 & Influenza Vaccination Update

As of October 19th, San Juan County COVID positive numbers were 338. While this number might still seem small, it is important to compare it to this time last year, when the positive cases were approximately 36. It is more important than ever to take the right precautions to help slow the spread and keep yourselves and your neighbors safe: get vaccinated, wear your mask, social distance and wash your hands regularly.

Island Primary Care – Orcas will be offering primary and secondary COVID-19 vaccinations at in-clinic appointments starting in October. We are coordinating with San Juan County Health Department regarding COVID-19 boosters.

For other vaccine locations in San Juan County, visit the San Juan County Public Health website, <https://www.sanjuanco.com/1737/COVID-Vaccine-Info>.

You can also find up-to-date information on our website at <https://www.islandhospital.org/orcas/>.

Island Primary Care – Orcas will have adult flu shot clinics scheduled from 8 a.m.–4 p.m. on November 4th and 16th and December 2nd. High-dose flu vaccinations will be available. *Appointments are required, please call (360) 293-3101 to schedule.* We will also offer the flu vaccine in scheduled, clinic appointments.

Island Primary Care – Orcas: Meet the rest of your staff!

Hear what our amazing staff say about working in healthcare.

“I love coming to work every day and seeing people I know, but also meeting islanders who have lived here just as long as I have (since 1999) and our paths just never crossed. I really enjoy the new x-ray machine, which has given me a chance to improve my skills and learn some new ones. Taking care of patients is key, but putting a smile on their face just makes my day as well.” – Joy C., Registered X-ray Technician.

“Working in healthcare provides me the opportunity to contribute to my communities’ wellness in small but meaning full ways.” – Tibellie C., MA.

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“I like working at Island Primary Care – Orcas because of the huge impact it makes on the community. The health and wellness of our little island is very important to not only myself but for our patients as well.” – Sarah B., Patient Appointment Coordinator.

“I wanted to do something in my career that is challenging, interesting and impactful in people’s lives. One of the most rewarding aspects is the ability to connect with our patients on such a personal level. While we often meet under very difficult circumstances—being present as they face serious health challenges or injuries—I have the opportunity to play an important role in their lives.” – Mary G., LPN.

Community Education’s November Class Offerings

Community Education classes continue to be offered online at this time. All online classes at Island Hospital are free and require registration unless specifically stated in the class description. Any health screenings that Island Hospital is offering during this time take place on our main campus in Anacortes.

If you have questions, please call Island Hospital Community Education for more information: 360-299-4204.

To view upcoming classes, visit www.islandhospital.org/classes

Island Primary Care – Orcas is here for your healthcare needs. You can reach us by calling: (360) 376-2561 or (360) 293-3101.

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