



# State of the County Health Report

2023

The state of NC along with the NC Local Health Department Accreditation program requires local health departments to conduct a comprehensive Community Health Assessment (CHA) every 3-4 years. The most recent Harnett County Community Health Assessment was conducted in 2022. The 2023 **State of the County's Health Report** is compiled to provide updates related to the Community Health Assessment and the work surrounding our health priorities. The health priorities as identified by county residents, include **Chronic Disease Prevention** and **substance abuse/overdose prevention** as health priorities. This report provides an overview and update for the selected health priorities, changes in mortality and morbidity data since the CHA, information on emerging issues, and details on any new initiatives.

## Leading Causes of Death

1. Heart Disease
2. Cancer
3. Other Unintentional injuries
4. Chronic Respiratory Disease
5. Cerebrovascular disease
6. COVID-19
7. Diabetes Mellitus
8. Alzheimer's disease
9. Motor Vehicle Injuries
10. Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome, &

**Leading Causes of Death:** There were some changes in Harnett County's Leading causes of death since the 2022 Community Health Assessment. Based on data from the NC State Center for Health Statistics, diseases of the heart surpassed cancer all sites as the number one leading cause of death among Harnett County residents. The top three leading causes of death among Harnett County residents are heart disease, cancer, and other unintentional injuries.

Cause of Death 2017-2021	Number of Deaths	Death Rate
Heart Disease	1106	179.3
Cancer	1157	173.3
Other Unintentional Injuries	362	55.7

## Priority 1: Chronic Disease Prevention:

Chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States (CDC). Many chronic diseases are caused by key risk behaviors. By making healthy choices, you can reduce your likelihood of getting a chronic disease and improve your quality of life.

- **Diabetes** is the 7<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death (age-adjusted) in Harnett County.

Lifestyle changes can help prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes, the most common form of the disease. The Health Department in partnership with FirstHealth continues to provide the Diabetes Prevention Program. The Prevent Type 2 Diabetes(T2) Lifestyle Change Program is part of the NC Minority Diabetes Prevention Program.



Prevent T2 is a yearlong lifestyle change program for those with prediabetes or at high risk for diabetes. A Lifestyle Coach works with participants for one year. Program participants are prediabetic or determined to be at-risk for diabetes through a blood test and/or risk assessment.

**Progress:** The Health Department continues to provide this program and conducted sessions February 2022-March 2023.

- Approximately 88% of class participants were ethnic and racial minorities.
- Six of the 7 (85%) participants lost weight by the conclusion of the program.

If you have prediabetes, losing a small amount of weight if you're overweight and getting regular physical activity can lower your risk for developing type 2 diabetes. For more information about this program call the Health Department through the Health Education Division 910-893-7550.



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**“Step into Fitness” Virtual Walking Challenge:** Regular physical activity helps improve overall health, fitness, and quality of life. It also helps reduce your risk of chronic conditions like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, many types of cancer. The “Step into Fitness” Virtual Walking Challenge is a 4-week program that helps participants move more by offering simple suggestions to increase physical activity through walking. Participants receive weekly newsletters with tips on moving more as well as a walking log to keep track of their points. **Progress:** In 2023, approximately 100 people completed this physical activity program.



The **Maintain Don't Gain Holiday Challenge** is a 6-week program designed to help individuals maintain their weight during the holiday season. This free virtual program includes weekly emails with healthy holiday tips such as managing holiday stress, ideas for fitting in physical activity, and healthy eating. **Progress:** In 2023, approximately 35 people participated in the program, 71% of participants maintained or lost weight.

**Cancer** ranks as the second leading cause of death in Harnett County and North Carolina. Harnett's mortality rate for breast cancer decreased since 2014 by 7.3%, while the North Carolina rate decreased by 4.6% over the same time frame.

The Health Department in partnership with Rex Mobile Mammography provides access to screenings. A mammogram is an X-ray picture of the breast. Doctors use a mammogram to look for early signs of breast cancer. Although breast cancer screening cannot prevent breast cancer, it can help find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat.

**Progress:** In 2023, the Health Department provided 12 screenings with 165 women screened.

- 64% of the women screened were ethnic and racial minorities.
- 35% of the total women screened were uninsured.  
*\*Funding assistance is provided for women who are uninsured meet program criteria through Rex Mammography Assistance program.*
- 90% of the women kept their screening appointment.



Regular mammograms are the best tests doctors have to find breast cancer

For more information about the mobile mammography screening program please call 910-893-7550.

## Priority 2: Overdose Prevention

Opioid overdose deaths have been increasing in the United States, in North Carolina and Harnett County.

- In 2021, there were **71 overdose related deaths** in Harnett County. The number of emergency department visits linked to opioid incidents having doubled since 2016, reaching a total of 280 in 2022.
- The NC Opioid Settlement funding is providing \$11.5 million to Harnett County over the next 18 years. This encouraged the creation of the Harnett County Opioid Task Force in September 2022.

The Harnett County Opioid Task Force is a group of community members, local organizations, health care professionals, law enforcement, educators, and other relevant stakeholders, working together to prevent overdoses and harmful substance abuse.

For more information about the Harnett County Opioid Task Force: <https://www.harnett.org/admin/>.



*Prevention activities help educate and support individuals, families, and communities and are critical for maintaining both individual and community health.*

## Emerging Issues:

- **Hospital discontinued labor and delivery:** Betsy Johnson Hospital located in Dunn announced September 2023, it will stop providing labor and delivery services in October 2023. The hospital is operated by Cape Fear Valley Health System in Fayetteville, and the news impacts many expectant mothers.



Congenital syphilis is preventable.

- **Congenital Syphilis:** Congenital syphilis is on the rise in North Carolina. In 2023, there were seven neonatal and stillbirth deaths due to congenital syphilis in North Carolina. In Harnett County there were seven (7) probable cases of congenital syphilis. The Health Department staff continues to work closely with disease intervention specialists and prenatal providers to ensure adequate early treatment.
- **Women, Infants and Children (WIC):** The Health Department's WIC program resumed in-person appointments in August 2023. The WIC program provides access to healthy food, nutrition education, breastfeeding support for moms-to-be, new moms and families with young children.

- **Infant Mortality:** Infant mortality is the death of an infant before his or her first birthday. The death of a child is a tragic loss for a family, as well as the community. The Health Department is committed to improving birth and health outcomes for mothers and babies. Since the 2022 CHA Harnett's infant mortality rate slightly decreased.

Infant Mortality NC Resident Infant Death Rates (per 1,000 live births)	2016-2020	2017-2021
North Carolina	7.0	6.9
<b>Harnett County</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>6.4</b>

COVID-19 is the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in Harnett County

**COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Ended:** The Department of Health and Human Services announced the expiration for the Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 as May 2023. While cases are down, COVID-19 is still a threat, and the virus remains a leading cause of death in the United States.

- In Harnett County COVID-19 moved from the 9<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death to the **6<sup>th</sup> leading** cause of death.
- COVID-19 mortality for Harnett includes approximately **286** total deaths reported.

## New Initiatives:

- **Mobile Health Program:** The Health Department's Mobile Health program was initiated in May of 2023. Mobile clinics can successfully reduce barriers in access to healthcare, provide more opportunities for underserved populations. The mobile health clinic includes a fully functional clinical exam room, triage station and immunization storage units.

In 2023 the Health Department's mobile health program attended several community outreach programs which included Kindergarten vaccinations at five summer reading camps located at Harnett County elementary schools. Administered vaccinations (Flu and COVID-19) at area food pantries. The mobile unit was utilized to dispense potassium iodide (KI) tablets at a local fire station. The Health Department provides potassium iodide (KI) tablets to county residents and businesses who are within 10-miles of the nuclear power plant.



Harnett County Health Department's mobile health vehicle

- **Narcan distribution program:** Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse an overdose from opioids—including heroin, fentanyl, and prescription opioid medications—when given in time. In September 2023 the Health Department implemented the Naloxone Distribution Project (NDP) to combat opioid overdose-related deaths. The Health Department has worked to identify and recruit additional distribution partners in the county which have included Harnett County Sheriff's Office, Harnett County Schools, and three pharmacy sites as part of our efforts to increase the availability of naloxone sites across the county. For more information about this program please call 910-893-7550.
- **Child Safety:** (Gun locks and Medication Lock Bag distribution programs). The Health Department received an Ann Wolfe Mini Grant in September of 2023 to implement an injury prevention program for children. Utilizing grant funds 375 cable gun locks and 268 medication safe lock bags along with educational materials were purchased. Our goal is to educate parents and guardians about firearm and medication safety. Our plan is to provide access to gun locks and medicine lock bags to help prevent accidental child deaths in Harnett County.



The 2023 State of the County Health Report will be disseminated to key stakeholders and community partners including the Board of Health, and others. To learn about public health services and programs in Harnett County visit: our web site [www.harnett.org/health](http://www.harnett.org/health). Copies of this report can be viewed and downloaded from the Health Department's website.