

# HOW IS PRIMARY BREAST CANCER TREATED?

## The treatment team

**BREAST  
CANCER  
NOW** The research  
& care charity

This information is for anyone who has primary breast cancer and wants to know more about how it is treated.

It is written by Breast Cancer Now, a charity that helps people who have breast cancer and other breast conditions.

You can also get Breast Cancer Now's longer free booklet **Treating primary breast cancer.**

# WHAT IS IN THIS INFORMATION?

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In this information, there are answers to lots of questions about who is in your treatment team and why they suggest different treatments for different people. The questions are listed on the next two slides. Click on them to go straight to that section.

## TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM

How is primary breast cancer treated?

Who will treat my breast cancer?

Who is in a treatment team?

How does the team decide which treatments will work best for me?

How will I find out what treatments I need?

How do I make choices about my treatment?

What questions can I ask about my treatment?

What if I don't understand the answers to my questions?

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# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM

## How is primary breast cancer treated?

There are lots of ways breast cancer can be treated.

There is more than one sort of breast cancer.

Primary breast cancer is breast cancer that has not spread outside the breast or the glands under your arm. The glands under your arm are called lymph nodes.

Breast cancer can grow at different speeds. Some breast cancers grow quite quickly, others more slowly.

Breast cancer can be found at different stages of growing. For example, when it is only inside the breast. Or when it has spread from your breast to the lymph nodes under your arm.

# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM

## More about how breast cancer is treated

The different treatments that can be used will depend on your case.

You might be offered more than one of the treatments in the list below.

The treatments are not always given in the order shown here.

### **Surgery**

An operation or more than one operation.

### **Chemotherapy**

Drugs to kill breast cancer cells.

### **Radiotherapy**

X-rays to kill breast cancer cells.

### **Hormone therapy**

Drugs to stop your hormones from helping the cancer to grow.

### **Targeted therapy**

Drugs to try to stop cancer cells growing.

### **Bisphosphonates**

Drugs to try to stop cancer cells from spreading.

# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM



## Who will treat my breast cancer?

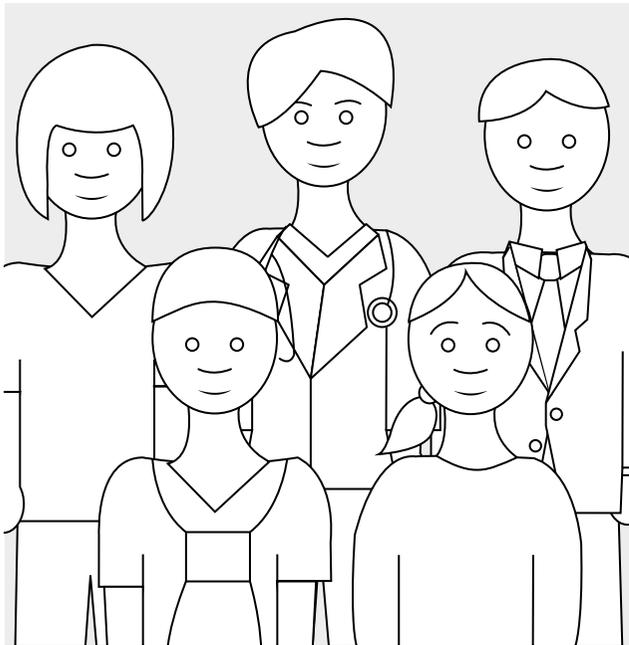
You will be treated by different breast cancer experts at different times during your treatment.

These experts will work together as a team to decide which treatments will be best for you. This team is your treatment team.

In hospital, you might hear your treatment team called a multidisciplinary team or MDT.

Your main contact is your breast care nurse. They are there to give you support and information.

# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM



## Who is in a treatment team?

### **Breast care nurses**

Nurses who give support and information about breast cancer.

### **Breast cancer surgeons**

Doctors who are experts in breast cancer operations.

### **Chemotherapy nurses**

Nurses trained to give cancer drugs.

### **Clinical oncologists**

Doctors who are experts in radiotherapy and cancer drugs.

### **Medical oncologists**

Doctors who are experts in cancer drugs.

### **Oncoplastic surgeons**

Breast cancer surgeons with training in plastic surgery.

### **Pathologists**

Doctors who are experts in finding out more about breast cancer using a microscope.

### **Radiologists**

Doctors who are experts in different ways of looking for and looking at breast cancer, such as using x-rays or sound waves.

# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM

## How does the team decide which treatments will be best for me?

To decide which treatment will be best for you, your treatment team will do some tests and checks on the cancer. These will find out:

- What sort of breast cancer you have
- How fast it is growing
- What size it is
- What might be helping it to grow

# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM

## More about deciding which treatments will be best for me

Some of the tests and checks your treatment team will use to find out more about you and your breast cancer are listed here.

- Blood tests
- Chest x-ray
- Liver scan
- Bone scan
- CT scan
- MRI scan
- PET scan

Not everybody will need all these tests. Someone from the treatment team will explain which tests they would like you to have and why.

# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM

## How will I find out what treatments I need?

When the tests have been done, your treatment team will look at what the tests show.

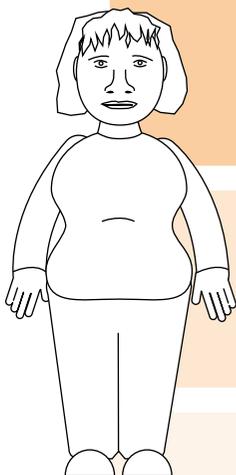
Your treatment team will decide which treatments they believe will be best for you.

They will tell you what these treatments are.

# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM

## How do I make choices about my treatment?

You can decide how much you want to be involved in making choices about your treatment. Talk to your treatment team about this when they tell you which treatments they are suggesting for you.



Some people want to be very involved in making choices about their treatment and want to know everything about their breast cancer.

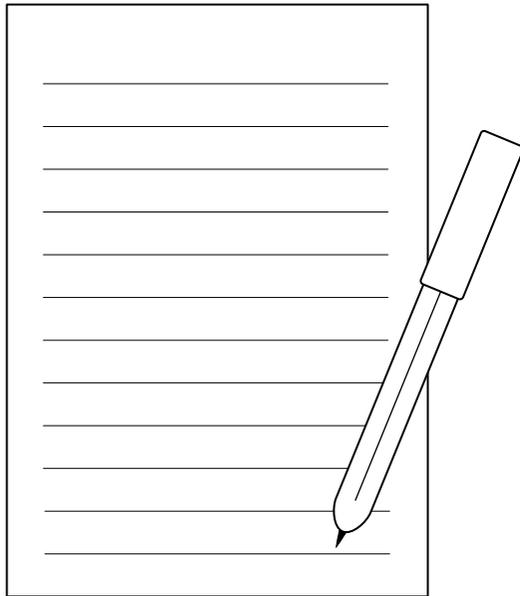
Some people want to leave the choices about treatment to the treatment team and want to know everything about their breast cancer.

Some people want to leave the choices to the treatment team and to know very little about their breast cancer.

You can change your mind about this at any time while you are being treated.

# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM

## What questions can I ask about my treatment?



You can ask your treatment team as many questions as you like. Here are some ideas.

- Why is this the best treatment for me?
- Are there any other treatments I could have instead?
- How long will my treatment take?
- Will there be side effects?
- How will treatment affect my everyday life?
- Will there be effects that last a long time once my treatment has finished?
- Will the treatment affect my chance of having a baby?
- Where do I have to go for treatment?

# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM



## What if I don't understand the answers to my questions?

If there is anything you don't understand, ask your breast care nurse to explain it to you.

You can also call Breast Cancer Now free on **0808 800 6000**.

The person who answers your call to Breast Cancer Now will be someone who knows a lot about breast cancer.

They won't tell anyone else what you talked about.

# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM

## How much time can I have to decide about my treatment?

If you need to take a few days to make up your mind about the treatments you are being offered, that is OK.

A short delay will not make your breast cancer more difficult to treat.

Some people like to take the time to talk it through with their breast care nurse, family, friends or GP.

## TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM

### **Can I ask to see a different cancer expert to check if they agree about the best treatment for me?**

You can ask to see a different cancer expert to check if they agree about the best treatments for you.

If you want to do this, talk to your GP or hospital doctor.

It can take a few weeks to do this, but this short delay will not affect how well your treatment works.

# TREATMENTS AND THE TEAM

## Do I have to have treatment?

Sometimes people choose not to have a treatment because of what they believe in.

Sometimes people are afraid that the treatments won't work or will be too difficult to cope with.

If you feel like this, you can talk about it with your breast care nurse, treatment team or your GP. They will be able to tell you what is likely to happen with your breast cancer if you do not have treatment.

You can also call Breast Cancer Now to talk it through. We will give you as much information and support as you need to make your decision.

If you decide not to have the treatment suggested, your treatment team can still support you.

# AFTER YOUR TREATMENT

## What happens when my hospital treatment is finished?

After your hospital treatment is finished, the hospital will have a system to check how you are getting on.

This checking system is called follow up.

Different hospitals have different follow up. It might include:

- Hospital appointments
- Seeing your GP
- Phone calls with your treatment team
- Getting a clinic appointment if something is worrying you

You can also get our free book **Moving Forward: for people living with and beyond a diagnosis of breast cancer.** Or you can download our free app BECCA for tips on getting back to a normal life after breast cancer.

# AFTER YOUR TREATMENT

## How will I feel when my hospital treatment is finished?

When you have finished your hospital treatment, all sorts of feelings can come up. Not everyone is the same but many people find this is a difficult time. Some common feelings are listed below.

- Shock about what has happened
- Worries about the cancer coming back
- Worries about how to get back to a normal life
- Worries about how to cope with permanent changes to your body
- Worries about how to cope with changes to your relationships

These feelings, changes and worries can take a long time to settle.

If you would like to talk about your breast cancer and how you are feeling, you can talk to your breast care nurse.

Breast Cancer Now is also here to give you support and information.

# INFORMATION AND SUPPORT



## Who can I talk to about my breast cancer?

You can talk to your breast care nurse.

You can call Breast Cancer Now free for support and information on **0808 800 6000**.

The person who answers your call to Breast Cancer Now will be a nurse or someone else who knows a lot about breast cancer.

They won't tell anyone else what you talked about.

# INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

## Where can I find out more about my treatments?

There are more simple summary slides about treating primary breast cancer. Find them by clicking on subject areas at this website page

[breastcancernow.org/primarytreatment](https://breastcancernow.org/primarytreatment)

You can get Breast Cancer Now's longer free booklet  
**Treating primary breast cancer**

Call our Helpline on **0808 800 6000**