My perfect day after a tough year of treatment
‘The Forum is somewhere safe where you can cry and laugh with people who know exactly what you are going through.’

The Forum doesn’t close for Christmas. Our welcoming community offers support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

breastcancercare.org.uk/forum
The end of hospital treatment for breast cancer can bring its own challenges and pressures.

The pressure to ‘move on’ or ‘get back to normal’ can feel very real. It doesn’t help if the people around you don’t seem to realise you’re still dealing with physical or emotional effects, even though you’re no longer having active treatment.

Pressure can come from different angles. If you’ve ever felt under pressure to move forward after treatment, stay positive or even to make big changes to your lifestyle, turn to page 10 to read our top tips to help take the pressure off.

Our cover star Lorraine found the period after hospital treatment ended difficult to adjust to. Like many people, she worried that every ache or pain meant the cancer had come back. Support from her partner, Shelley, helped her through the difficult times. And one year after Lorraine’s diagnosis, the couple were married in a stunning Highland wedding. Turn to page 6 to read Lorraine’s story.

Continuing with the theme of finishing treatment, elsewhere in this issue we look at follow-up care and ask: what should you expect? Something that often causes confusion is that different people are followed up in different ways, and there’s no ‘one size fits all’ approach. Turn to page 20 to find out more.

Gareth Fletcher
Editor
vita@breastcancercare.org.uk

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Your letters and emails

Dear Vita

Thank you for raising the taboo of how breast cancer and treatment affect intimacy and, inevitably, relationships. One of the most enduring and stressful outcomes has been how breast cancer and the side effects of treatment have drawn an end to sex and brought [my partner and me] to the edge of breaking up. This is completely life changing. Bringing it out in the open is crucial.

Janet

Dear Vita

I was interested to read your article on breast prosthesis essentials.

A friend told me about a charity called Knitted Knockers UK. They make knitted prostheses. They also do a swim version. It is brilliant – easy to wash and so comfortable to wear inside my costume.

Mary

Dear Vita

I’ve been reading your article about loneliness post-cancer. I would like to recommend meetup.com as a good way to make new friends of all ages, and get out and about when those hospital visits end.

I joined Meetup when my husband died three years ago. I belong to a theatre Meetup and a cinema Meetup and one based in my home suburb which meets several times a month for pub quizzes, music nights or just coffee and conversation.

Susan

Dear Vita

At last someone is brave enough to air the news that sex life difficulties are a very common problem after breast cancer.

I am a good few years up the road now but despite all the knowledge, experience, talking, sharing and medications prescribed to help me, I have come to accept that sex will never be the same. Pain brings about problems for partners too. I ‘grin and bear it’ and he feels bad for causing pain.

We can still love, hold hands and kiss, but it is just so hard to accept and come to terms with.

Rosie

What’s on your mind?

Email vita@breastcancercare.org.uk
Write Vita magazine, Breast Cancer Care, Chester House, 1–3 Brixton Road, London SW9 6DE
BECCA’s lottery win

BECCA – the Breast Cancer Care app – has won the prize for Best Health Project at the 2018 National Lottery Awards. The app, which provides information, support and inspiration to help women move forward after breast cancer treatment, was selected from over 700 National Lottery-funded projects across the UK, beating six other initiatives in the health category.

The £5,000 prize will help further develop the app, which offers users information through simple flashcards in categories including blogs, concerns, inspiration and mindfulness.

BECCA is available free on iPhone and Android phones, or for more information visit breastcancercare.org.uk/Becca

Stronger united

In case you haven’t yet heard, Breast Cancer Care and Breast Cancer Now (the UK’s largest breast cancer research charity) will be merging in April 2019, creating one charity for everyone affected by breast cancer. By unifying our charities, we’ll be able to provide even more life-changing support while researching and campaigning more effectively for better treatment, services and care. Our new charity will have people affected by breast cancer at its heart – providing support for today and hope for the future. To find out more head to breastcancercare.org.uk/united

Charity aims to boost men’s confidence

Look Good Feel Better has launched a programme to help men deal with the visible side effects of cancer. The charity, which provides skincare and makeup tips to women with cancer through workshops and masterclasses, now offers ‘skin fitness’ workshops, an information booklet and online tutorials for men.

Around 370 men a year are diagnosed with breast cancer in the UK, and you can read David’s story on page 13.

For more information about Look Good Feel Better, visit lookgoodfeelbetter.co.uk or call 01372 747 500.
Breast cancer had already touched Lorraine’s family twice before she was diagnosed herself. ‘My mum had it and then my sister had it, but I still didn’t think it was going to be me,’ says Lorraine, who was diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer in January 2017. ‘I didn’t believe it. I had to lie down and take it all in.’

Lorraine, 47 of Glenboig, Lanarkshire, had found a lump in her breast just before Christmas, and had seen her doctor in the New Year.

Chemo was gruelling
Lorraine began the first of her chemotherapy sessions in February, followed later by surgery and radiotherapy.

Lorraine asked her sister, who had also had chemotherapy, what to expect.

‘She said she was fine,’ says Lorraine, ‘but that it was hard too at parts. Everyone is different, though, and for me it was really gruelling. It was good to talk to her about the side effects I had as she could reassure me at times.’

Lorraine had been with her partner, Shelley, for 16 years at the time. ‘Shelley was the one who got me through it,’ she says. ‘She’d run a bath for me at night, then lie on a bed on the bathroom floor with our dog, Ollie, to keep me company.

‘If it wasn’t for her I don’t know if I would have got through it.’

When Lorraine shaved her head, Shelley shaved hers too in support.

‘I never wore a wig,’ says Lorraine. ‘I thought, why hide? Be who you are. And Shelley always said, “You look amazing”.’

Compared to the chemotherapy, Lorraine found having her mastectomy and radiotherapy easier to cope with.

‘The surgery was fine,’ she says. ‘I didn’t have reconstruction. I didn’t want it.’

Gradually getting better
The period after hospital treatment ended was difficult to adjust to. ‘After treatment finished was tough,’ says Lorraine. ‘With every single niggle or pain I worried the cancer was going to come back. But gradually I’m getting better.’

Lorraine says Shelley kept her positive and helped her to smile. ‘Me and Shelley laughed every day and that’s what got me through.’

The couple took a holiday together when Lorraine’s treatment had finished.

‘We went to Barcelona for a few days and had such a wonderful time,’ she says. ‘I couldn’t really do a lot of walking, but I didn’t even think about it.’

A magical day
Having cancer does change your attitude, says Lorraine, who describes her approach to life after treatment as: ‘Let’s go and do this’.

A perfect day after a tough year
A year after she was diagnosed with breast cancer, Lorraine Coyle-McLaren married her partner of 17 years in an idyllic Highland wedding.
It was partly this attitude that led her to propose to Shelley on Valentine’s Day, three days before starting treatment. The couple had had a blessing in 2001, 13 years before same-sex marriage became legal in Scotland. But they had always said they would get married.

‘I asked her on 14 February, and treatment started on the 17th. I thought: Why am I waiting on this?’

Lorraine’s novel way of proposing involved a jigsaw with both their pictures on, along with the words ‘Will you marry me?’ Once Shelley had completed the puzzle and seen the message, Lorraine called their dog Ollie into the room, who was carrying an engagement ring attached to a ribbon on his collar.

‘It was perfect,’ says Shelley. The couple married in an idyllic log cabin setting in the Highlands, surrounded by snow. A pair of stags even made an appearance in time for the photos.

‘We had the most fantastic time,’ says Lorraine. ‘It was magical. Stags, snow, and just the two of us. We’d had such a tough year, we thought: let’s just be together and do it ourselves.’

Out of this world

This year, Lorraine was one of 24 models who appeared on the catwalk at Breast Cancer Care’s annual fundraising fashion show in Glasgow on 25 October.

She was inspired to apply after reading the stories of the models in previous years. ‘I thought they were all fantastic and very inspiring, even before I was diagnosed,’ she says.

‘The Show was absolutely amazing. It’s an experience I will cherish forever and I’ve made friends for life.

‘I wanted to look glam and I certainly did. I wore false eyelashes for the first time.

‘I felt like a supermodel with everyone cheering and clapping.

It was so full of emotion but at the same time a big celebration of how far we have all come. It was out of this world.’

Lorraine says she was thinking of her mum as she walked down the catwalk.

‘Mum died from secondary breast cancer in July, and I was doing it in her memory,’ she says. ‘She was really happy to hear I was chosen to be part of The Show.’

To order a copy of Breast Cancer Care’s Chemotherapy for breast cancer booklet, visit breastcancercare.org.uk/publications or call 0808 800 6000.
Natural fibres are soft on the skin, lightweight, breathable and wick away moisture, making them comfortable to wear.

All of these properties are really important when layering, but especially if you’re experiencing side effects of breast cancer treatment, such as menopausal symptoms, or when your skin is feeling sensitive.

When you think of natural fibres, you might picture wool, cotton and cashmere. There are, however, many others to choose from, and they’re available from high-street stores as well as online.

Natural fibres originate from either plants, such as cotton, or animal fibres, such as sheep’s wool. As a completely renewable resource, natural fibres benefit the environment as well as the wearer. And many of them keep you warm when it’s cold, and cool when it’s hot.

If you’re looking for inspiration for your wardrobe, think about a few key pieces made from natural fibres. Rachel Rawson explains why.

**Brilliant bamboo**
Bamboo is a natural plant fibre you may know less about.

Bamboo fabric is similar in softness to silk. It’s hypoallergenic so perfect for people who experience allergic reactions to other natural fibres such as wool or hemp. Bamboo is also antibacterial and antifungal.

Unlike many other fabrics, bamboo is extremely breathable and able to keep the wearer almost two degrees cooler in the heat and noticeably warmer in the cold. One of the amazing things about bamboo fabric is that it is UV protective, cutting out 98% of the sun’s harmful UV rays.

**Wonder wool**
Did you know that wool can absorb twice as much moisture vapour as cotton, and 10 times as much as polyester? Wool traps air between the bends, creases and micro-holes of the fabrics. This trapped air acts as an insulator, generating warmth in the winter and coolness in the summer.

Caring for natural fibres
It’s always worth checking the washing care label as you might need to take a bit more care when washing natural fabrics. Having said that, cotton is pretty resilient when it comes to a hot wash.

Silk, wool and bamboo, however, need to be treated with care, and if the label recommends a hand wash, it’s worth taking the time to do it so that your garments last longer.
Keeping cool at night can be a challenge. Cotton bed linen and nightwear, such as these pyjamas from M&S, could help you avoid overheating.

WoolOvers (woolovers.com) has a really versatile waterfall cardigan, made from merino wool and cashmere. It comes in a wide selection of colours and sizes and is great for layering.

If you’re looking for a long-sleeved, long-length cotton top, Dorothy Perkins (dorothyperkins.com) has options in plain colours or stripes with a V or round neck.

If you’re after comfort during and after chemotherapy, bamboo socks may be the answer. SockShop (sockshop.co.uk) stocks a wide range of styles and colours. TK Maxx also has a good selection.

Five places to shop for natural fabrics
You’ve counted down the days and the end of hospital treatment has arrived. It might feel like a relief and a real achievement.

But it can be a challenging time, too. And the reality might be different to your expectations or other people’s.

‘After treatment, family and friends often think you look well and so expect everything to be fine,’ says Clinical Nurse Specialist Addie Mitchell. ‘But that’s not the way you might feel inside.’

Addie points out that family and friends are usually well-meaning. ‘They just want you to be OK,’ she says.

‘The important thing is to take time to adjust to life after treatment,’ says Addie, ‘rather than feeling pressured to do all the things you did before cancer.’

Many women want to protect family and friends so don’t tell them how they really feel. Rather, they might put on a brave face or feel they should ‘stay positive’.

Addie says speaking to other people who understand can help. ‘There’s a lot of support out there. Breast Cancer Care’s Someone Like Me service can put you in touch with someone who’s been through a similar thing and who’ll understand how you’re feeling,’ she says.

You could also try Breast Cancer Care’s online Forum.

**The blame game**

According to Addie, many women who call the Breast Cancer Care Helpline feel guilty about getting cancer in the first place.

‘Lots of people want to blame themselves,’ she says, ‘perhaps because they feel they weren’t healthy enough or they drank too much alcohol.’

Frequent news stories about lifestyle risk factors might add to the guilt.

But Addie urges people not to think like this. ‘It’s not anything you’ve done or haven’t done,’ she says. ‘Breast cancer is common, but the good news is we have great treatments.’

Sometimes people feel pressure to make dramatic lifestyle changes after a breast cancer diagnosis.

‘If changing your lifestyle makes you feel better, then that’s fine,’ says Addie. ‘But taking radical steps is unlikely to change your outcome.’

Addie recommends doing some physical activity, trying to maintain a healthy weight and drinking alcohol in moderation, which is good for overall health and can help you feel better.

**Physical effects**

While most side effects of treatment start to improve once treatment ends, some can continue, and this can affect your ability to carry out everyday activities.

According to a recent survey by Breast Cancer Care, a third of women with breast cancer have constant pain as a result of treatment. Fatigue is another common side effect that can stop people feeling that they’re moving forward.

‘When people call the Helpline and are worried or upset that they’re still fatigued after treatment,’ says Addie, ‘I get them to reflect on what they’ve been through: an operation, maybe chemotherapy and trastuzumab… No wonder they’re tired. It’s going to take a while to recover.’

Physical side effects can touch many areas of life after treatment, from work to relationships.

Addie recommends reporting any side effects to your treatment team.

Breast Cancer Care’s free Moving Forward book has detailed information on topics including work and finances, relationships and intimacy, and coping with physical and emotional changes after treatment.
‘I was taking on everyone’s worries’

Emma Gittins, who was diagnosed with breast cancer at 37, has felt pressure to move on since her treatment ended in June 2018.
‘I feel, rightly or wrongly, like everyone around me just wants to get back to normal and for me to move on,’ she says.
‘For them it’s over. As a people pleaser, I am putting pressure on myself to get back to normal, whatever that is, for everyone else’s sake.’

Emma recently visited Breast Cancer Haven (breastcancerhaven.org.uk) in Hereford to arrange some complementary therapies.

‘I realise that it is so important to take care of my mental health and to be kind to myself,’ she says.
‘I also use the Headspace app and practise mindfulness techniques when I feel like things are getting on top of me.’

Emma’s tip for other women is to be kind to yourself.
‘As women we feel an enormous amount of pressure to stay strong for everyone and to battle through. I found that I was taking on everyone’s worries.
‘Accept help whenever you can and find out what support is offered in your local area. It’s OK to be a little bit selfish sometimes. Self-care is so important.’

Five tips to take the pressure off

1. **Be kind to yourself** – breast cancer treatment can be tough, so don’t be hard on yourself if you don’t feel like celebrating when it finishes
2. **Acknowledge what you’ve been through** – recognise that you’ve had a traumatic experience, one that will take time to move on from
3. **Talk to someone who understands** – speaking to someone who’s been through the same thing can help
4. **Set achievable goals** – doing small things you know you can do could help boost your confidence
5. **Ask for help if you need it** – if you’re finding it difficult to move forward, your treatment team or GP can tell you if more specialist help, such as counselling, might be suitable

To read stories of how other people have coped after breast cancer treatment, download the free BECCA app or visit breastcancercare.org.uk/becca
If there’s an opportunity I go for it

Mary, 69, was first diagnosed and treated for breast cancer in 2003. But it was only a year or so later that tests and scans revealed she had secondary breast cancer in her bones.

‘Secondary breast cancer was a complete shock,’ she says. ‘You have primary breast cancer and think that’s it. Nobody warned me that secondary breast cancer was possible.’

The biggest effect of her diagnosis on daily life has been the uncertainty of living with a disease that, while treatable, cannot be cured. But it’s also this uncertainty that Mary says makes her ‘live life to the full’.

‘If there’s an opportunity to do something interesting or exciting, I go for it,’ she says. ‘I have quite an action-packed life. I sing in three choirs, go to international folk dancing each week and I have an active social life.’ Mary also helps at Chorlton Good Neighbours, working with elderly people.

Life hasn’t stopped

Mary says her husband and children are a brilliant support, but she also attends a Living with Secondary Breast Cancer group in Manchester. The biggest benefit of the group has been meeting other people in the same situation.

‘They’re the only people who can understand the uncertainty because they’re living with it,’ she says. ‘We’re all on an emotional rollercoaster, particularly when waiting for scan results.’

Mary also offers inspiration to newer members of the group.

‘When I say I’ve had 55 cycles of the chemotherapy drug capecitabine, it’s really encouraging for people who are just starting on the drug. It gives other people hope that they can live a long time.’

Mary is aware that other members of the group are not as well as she is, and sometimes feels guilty because of this.

‘It’s easy for me to say this as I’m not in a lot of pain, but life doesn’t stop when you get secondary breast cancer.’

Singing helps

Earlier this year, Mary broke her leg while hanging out the washing. Fractures can be a rare side effect of the bisphosphonate drug Mary had been taking daily for nine years.

However, she says she’s determined not to let cancer stop her doing the things she loves.

She recently enjoyed a dancing holiday in Bulgaria. And her choir is appearing on a well-known TV series (the details of which remain a secret for the time being).

It’s the singing, though, that Mary would recommend to others.

‘I really do think singing helps,’ she says. ‘I’d advise anyone at all to go to a choir. You come out feeling cheerful and upbeat.

‘I think it’s the best medicine.’
David was 51 when he found a lump on his right breast in 1999. ‘I had some vague idea that men could have breast cancer,’ says David, ‘but I had not given it much thought, although one of my three sisters had had it some time ago.’

His doctor, who thought it might not be anything serious, referred David to the local breast clinic in Colchester. Tests revealed the lump was cancer. ‘I was not too worried about it,’ says David, ‘and had confidence that the hospital could help me.’

Surprised
David told family first about his diagnosis, followed by friends. ‘They were surprised that men could have it, but seemed to accept it,’ he says.

Around 370 men a year in the UK are diagnosed with breast cancer. David had a mastectomy as part of his treatment. ‘I did not have any pain after the operation,’ he says. ‘The hospital was on a hill, and there was a window at the head of my bed, giving me an open view of Colchester. ‘When I left hospital my right arm was stiff and I had difficulty raising my arm for a few weeks. Now it only feels uncomfortable if I have a seatbelt across the scar.’

After his surgery, David was put on the hormone therapy drug tamoxifen for five years.

I’m not embarrassed
David says he’s not embarrassed by the fact that he had breast cancer. ‘I have sometimes walked topless on the beach or swimming pools,’ he says. ‘I have also been on a BBC programme where I showed my scar.’ He does feel that there isn’t enough publicity about breast cancer in men.

David, who is deaf, started volunteering with Breast Cancer Care to raise awareness. ‘At first I gave talks about breast cancer to groups of deaf people, both men and women,’ he says. ‘I once took part in a talk to some staff in the Houses of Parliament.’

David also appeared on the catwalk as a model at Breast Cancer Care’s London fashion show in 2007. He now offers email support to other men with breast cancer through the one-to-one support service Someone Like Me. ‘I decided to become a volunteer because I felt that I had something to offer,’ he says. ‘I used to work in a biology lab in a university and was familiar with health matters.’

David suggests men should be aware of the symptoms of breast cancer and check themselves. ‘It doesn’t take long,’ he says.

Having faced his own diagnosis, David is keen to raise awareness of breast cancer in men, and to support men going through the same thing.

To find out about Breast Cancer Care’s Someone Like Me service, visit breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0808 800 6000.
I won’t let secondary cancer stop me travelling

Travel blogger Jenni Sheldon tells us how she’s as determined as ever to see the world, despite her cancer diagnosis.

Going back five years, I was scared of flying. I would never have considered going further than Europe, even though I dreamt of travelling the world.

Fast forward a couple of years and I was diagnosed with breast cancer. It made me realise what genuine fear was.

I thought, if I can get through chemotherapy and side effects of cancer treatment, I can sit on a plane for a few hours. My travel adventures really started.

Planning my trips

During treatment, I kept dreaming of all the places I was going to visit. It got me through the dark days.

When I was at my lowest I would plan the places I was going to see when I got well again. I didn’t have a family or work to concentrate on and I really think it helped me get through the treatment.

It took me over a year to have the physical strength, as well as the courage, to do my first major trip outside of Europe.

I went to China on my own, and it was such an eye-opener. I then explored Thailand, Cuba, America…

People said I was an inspiration. I hated that. I didn’t want to talk about my cancer and I really didn’t think I was doing anything different from everyone else who had been through a cancer diagnosis.

As long as I can carry on travelling, I will find a way.

Travelling after cancer

I started blogging about my travels, mainly to tell my friends what I was getting up to.

But then fellow cancer patients started asking me for advice and I started opening up about my cancer experience and how it affected my travels.

I realised when people were saying I was brave and an inspiration to be able to travel independently, it was because they were scared of doing the same even though they wanted to.

So I shared my stories as a way of convincing others in a similar situation that travelling can still be done. I wanted to encourage people to take the trip as you really don’t know what’s around the corner in life.

Travelling after a cancer diagnosis is possible. It may have to be done slightly differently and require a little more planning, but it’s still manageable.

When my first reader contacted me to say I gave her the willpower to book the trip she had been wanting to do – and that she had the best time – it made all my blogging seem worthwhile.
Getting back out there

In December 2017 I started to feel unwell. Thinking I had worn myself out with all the travelling, I spent some time at home. But my symptoms got worse. In January I was diagnosed with secondaries. My breast cancer had spread to my liver, lungs and bones. I was absolutely devastated, but the main thing upsetting me was that I still had so many places to visit.

Chemotherapy started again, but I didn’t stop planning my trips. The research for my future adventures, and the thought of getting back out there again, got me through what seemed an even scarier experience than the first time round.

During chemo, I started travelling the UK when I was feeling well enough. I was still sharing my stories and the support I was getting online was wonderful. Now, my followers already knew about me and I felt I could be so much more open about my treatment. Cancer is part of my travel experience now and always will be.

I won’t stop

I will not let secondary cancer stop me from travelling.

There are a few more obstacles in my way now, such as insurance premiums. But there are companies out there that specialise in travelling with cancer. My advice is to contact them by phone, even if you get a ridiculously high quote online, as they still might insure you at a lower rate.

I have symptoms such as nausea, fatigue and peripheral neuropathy, so I factor in rest time. I know I can’t be nonstop sightseeing, even though I want to see everything, so I prioritise the places I really want to visit and take it a little slower.

When I was told I would be having treatment every three weeks for the foreseeable future, I truly believed that it was the end of my travels, especially long-haul. How can you go somewhere far from home for only a few days?

But as time passed, I started to realise I can still visit these places. I might not be able to go off months at a time, but I will just have to do shorter trips.

I will not let this stop me. As long as I can carry on travelling, I will find a way.

To read Jenni’s blog go to traveltorecovery.com
Your questions answered

Breast Cancer Care’s experts answer your questions about breast cancer and its treatments

Can I have immunotherapy?

**Q** I’ve read a lot about immunotherapy being used to treat cancer. I’ve just been diagnosed with breast cancer. Is this type of treatment suitable for me?

**A** Immunotherapy is treatment that involves helping the immune system to recognize and attack cancer cells. There are different types of immunotherapy.

Immunotherapy treatments are used to treat some cancers such as bladder, kidney and melanoma, but they’re not yet used to treat breast cancer. A number of clinical trials are looking at how well some types of immunotherapy might work for people diagnosed with certain types of breast cancer. cancerresearchuk.org has information about the different types of immunotherapy and how they work.

I’m still struggling to cope

**Q** I had treatment for breast cancer many years ago, but I’m still struggling to cope emotionally. Can I still get help?

**A** Adjusting to life after breast cancer can take a long time, and for some people the need for support continues long after treatment has finished.

People think they should be able to move on with their life as soon as hospital treatment has finished and often put on a brave face for family and friends. As time goes on it can become more difficult to ask for help. There’s no time limit on getting help with how you’re feeling, and it’s OK to ask for help whenever you feel you need it.

Calling our Helpline, posting on our online Forum or talking to someone who’s been there can help. Our Someone Like Me Service can put you in touch with someone who’s had breast cancer and understands how difficult it can be.

Talk to your GP about how you’re feeling. They may be able to help and can also refer you to a counsellor or psychologist for further support.
Q I’ve got secondary breast cancer in the bone and my oncologist said I need to look out for signs of spinal cord compression. What is this?

A The spinal cord is a bundle of nerves that runs from the brain to the lower back. If you have secondary breast cancer in the bone it may spread to the bones in the spine. This can sometimes put pressure on the spinal cord. This is called spinal cord compression.

Spinal cord compression can cause a number of symptoms including:
- unexplained back or neck pain which may also be felt around the front of the chest or tummy
- pain in the back which changes when you lie down, stand up or lift something
- difficulty walking
- numbness or pins and needles in the fingers, toes or bottom
- problems controlling or passing urine or bowel movements

If you have any of these symptoms, contact your treatment team straight away.

You can read more about spinal cord compression in our Secondary breast cancer in the bone booklet. There’s also a handy alert card at the back of the booklet to remind you of the symptoms you need to look out for.

Q I’m looking for a bra after having a mastectomy, and I think my cup size is 40G. Where can I find one in this size?

A It’s a good idea to go to a reputable lingerie department to be measured accurately by a trained, experienced fitter, such as M&S, John Lewis or House of Fraser. You could also go to a specialist lingerie shop.

You can order online from department stores or specialist suppliers once you know your correct size. Asda offers post-surgery bras (with pockets) up to a G cup, as do online companies houseofbath.co.uk and woman-zone.co.uk

Rigby & Peller also produce a range of bras with this cup size.

It’s really important to have a comfortable, well-fitting bra, particularly after breast surgery. You can choose a bra with or without a pocket for a prosthesis.

Your guide to a well-fitting bra is a leaflet for anyone who wants to know how a bra should fit. It includes illustrations and practical tips on how to make sure your bra fits comfortably and gives proper support.

You can also order Breast Cancer Care’s booklet Breast prostheses, bras and clothes after surgery.
Meet the authors

We put some questions to three authors who have turned their breast cancer experience into three very different books.

Describe your book in a nutshell

This is a no-nonsense, factual but sympathetic book for women (and indeed men) who’ve just been diagnosed with breast cancer. It takes them through the medical, emotional and practical aspects.

The Complete Guide to Breast Cancer: How to Feel Empowered and Take Control
by Professor Trisha Greenhalgh and Dr Liz O’Riordan

Co-author Trisha Greenhalgh tells us about this comprehensive guide to breast cancer by two doctors diagnosed with the disease.

Why did you decide to write a guide to breast cancer?

We thought there was a need for one book that covered the whole of breast cancer from diagnosis to recovery (and, for some, recurrence and death), which offered evidence-based advice and was told from the perspective of two doctors who had been through it themselves.

What do you hope your readers will gain from your book?

We hope people will feel empowered and able to take control of their breast cancer. We know how frightening and disorienting it is when you’re first diagnosed. We want them to find the answers to their questions.

Did being a doctor help prepare you for your own diagnosis?

I think being a doctor helped when having the different treatments (in my case mastectomy, chemotherapy and Herceptin). While I had to look up the detail, I was broadly familiar with all these treatments. But it didn’t help with the emotional and practical aspects.
Describe your book in a nutshell

The Inflatable Woman is the story of the anxiety I experienced after my breast cancer diagnosis in 2011. Iris, a zoo keeper, discovers she has breast cancer. She quickly enters a world peopled with looming shadows. It’s a surreal, dark, sad, romantic and comical tale.

Why did you make a graphic novel about breast cancer?

I had been a cartoonist in my 20s but having a child and going into teaching pushed my personal ambitions to the side. The cancer diagnosis made me realise I’d always meant to get back into cartooning.

Who is ‘the inflatable woman’?

That’s a reference to the tissue expander Iris has as part of her breast reconstruction. But also to an experience I had after my mastectomy. A few weeks after surgery my breast appeared to have regrown! I rushed to A&E to discover it was a seroma, and fluid had filled the space to such a degree I appeared to have two breasts again.

One theme is dating after a cancer diagnosis. Is this something you experienced?

I happened to be already talking to someone on an internet site when I got my diagnosis. He started being supportive and wrote to me every day. I became too attached to him and then very disappointed when I realised he didn’t feel the same way.

Post-treatment I have found men have not been that bothered about scars and things.

Describe your book in a nutshell

Our book is about two children whose mum is diagnosed with primary breast cancer. It explains what breast cancer is, explores the treatments that Mum has and how they make her feel, and how Mum being ill affects the whole family and how they cope.

Why did you write the book?

We had already written two books to help children, like our two, who had a family member with kidney disease. So when I was diagnosed with breast cancer, I wanted to write a book that was similar in style but specific to breast cancer.

What was your experience of talking to children about cancer?

It was really hard, especially as their dad had been seriously ill with renal failure. We reassured them that the doctors thought it was treatable. We’ve repeatedly been surprised by how mature and amazing our children have been in taking our news.

What are your tips for telling children about cancer?

Be honest. As parents we want to protect our children, but they know if you’re sleeping more than usual or being sick, for example.

Allow them to express their feelings or worries. We found telling our children that it’s OK to be worried, angry or sad enabled them to cope with their feelings.

Visit facebook.com/MeetLucyandJack to find out more.
‘Follow-up’ is the term for the ongoing care or monitoring people have once hospital treatments for breast cancer have finished. Everyone should be offered some form of follow-up. But one thing that can cause confusion is that different people are followed up in different ways.

**Different types**

There’s no ‘one size fits all’ approach when it comes to follow-up, and how you’re followed up after treatment will be individual to you.

It can depend on how likely you are to have side effects from treatment; the risk of the cancer coming back; and also on arrangements at the hospital where you’ve been treated.

Not everyone is offered regular clinic appointments once their treatment has finished. If this is the case, you should be given information to help you manage your own health. But you should be told how to access the breast clinic if you have any concerns or symptoms that need to be looked at by a doctor or nurse.

Other people are offered planned appointments with a member of their treatment team. These usually focus on how you’re feeling, and are an opportunity to talk about any side effects, problems or questions you have. You might also have a physical examination. However, these appointments don’t always happen in person – they might be done over the phone or by email.

Many people ask why they’re not given regular body scans or blood tests to detect early signs of the breast cancer having returned. The reason is that current evidence shows that having regular scans when there are no symptoms is not useful in finding a recurrence and doesn’t improve overall survival.

**Mammograms – how often should I have them?**

When it comes to how often mammograms are offered after treatment, most treatment teams follow recommendations from NICE – the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

If you’re under 50, you’ll have a yearly mammogram until you’re invited to take part in a national breast screening programme, which happens usually around the age of 50.

If you were already eligible for breast screening when diagnosed, you’ll have a yearly mammogram for five years.

All women aged 50 to 70 are invited for mammograms every three years as part of a national breast screening programme. You can still have regular mammograms after 70, but you’ll need to arrange this yourself by contacting the screening unit covering your area.

If you had breast-conserving surgery – also known as a wide local excision or lumpectomy – you’ll have a mammogram on both breasts. If you had a mastectomy, you’ll have a mammogram only on your non-treated breast, even if you had reconstruction.
Staying breast and body aware

Most people’s breast cancer won’t return after treatment, but sometimes breast cancer can come back and it’s very common to worry about this. A recent study by Breast Cancer Care found that 45% of women experience ongoing fear that their cancer may return after treatment. These feelings usually lessen with time. But knowing how to stay ‘breast and body aware’ after treatment is important and could help manage feelings of uncertainty.

The most important thing to remember is to talk to your GP or a member of your treatment team about any symptoms that are new, don’t have an obvious cause and don’t go away. These might be changes to the breast or chest area on either side. Or they might be general symptoms such as unexplained weight loss and loss of appetite, feeling tired all the time or pain in your bones that doesn’t get better with pain relief.

Of course, having the odd ache and pain or feeling tired from time to time is common and can have many different causes. But the important thing is to report any symptoms that don’t improve.

If you’ve finished hospital treatment, you should have been told about the signs and symptoms to be aware of. However, Breast Cancer Care found that over half (55%) of women with breast cancer are not given any information about the signs and symptoms of recurrence.

For information about staying breast and body aware after treatment, you can order Breast Cancer Care’s booklet *After breast cancer treatment: what now?*

Trouble coping?

Many people expect to feel relief once their hospital treatments have finished, and for some people this is the case. But for other people, coming to the end of treatment can be a difficult and emotional time.

Breast Cancer Care’s Moving Forward courses can help you adjust to life after treatment.

Whether you’re experiencing side effects of treatment, wondering how to adopt a healthier lifestyle or experiencing the uncertainty and anxiety that can follow treatment for breast cancer, Moving Forward is there to support you.

To find out about Breast Cancer Care’s Moving Forward courses and information booklet, visit breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0808 800 6000.
Winter warmers

Spice up your life with this seasonal veg curry and a colourful baked egg dish that’s as great for brunch as it is for dinner.

Winter vegetable curry with raita and brown rice

Serves 2
- 25g flaked almonds
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1-inch piece ginger, peeled and finely grated
- half a small butternut squash, peeled, seeds removed and discarded, cut into cubes
- 2 small carrots, peeled and cut into sticks
- 1 medium parsnip, peeled and cut into sticks
- 1 heaped tablespoon curry paste
- 10g fresh coriander, finely chopped
- 4 medium tomatoes, cut into quarters
- 100g brown basmati rice
- 3 tablespoon low-fat natural yoghurt
- 50g cucumber, grated

1 Toast the almonds by placing in a small frying pan over a very low heat and stirring until they are golden brown, taking care not to burn them. Put them to one side.

2 Heat the oil in a large thick-based saucepan with a lid. Add the onion, garlic and ginger and cook until soft, but not browned, for around 5 minutes. Stir in the squash, carrots and parsnip, and cook for a further 5 minutes until they begin to soften. Add the curry paste and cook for another 5 minutes.

3 Add 200ml of boiling water and half the coriander, cover with a lid and simmer for 40 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Uncover, stir through the tomatoes and then simmer to reduce the sauce to a thicker consistency.

4 Meanwhile, cook the rice in a medium-sized pan of water for around 20 minutes until tender.

5 To make the raita, mix the yoghurt and grated cucumber in a small bowl.

6 Garnish the curry with the remaining coriander and toasted almonds and serve with the rice and raita.
**Shakshuka**

**Serves 2**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- half a teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 large red pepper, seeds removed and discarded, cut into strips
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- pinch of saffron or turmeric
- 1 x 400g can chopped tomatoes
- pinch of salt
- pinch of ground black pepper
- 4 free-range eggs
- 2 medium slices wholemeal or granary bread, toasted

1. Heat the oil in a large non-stick, deep-sided frying pan. Add the fennel seeds and cook for 1 minute.
2. Add the onion and garlic to the pan and cook for another 3 minutes.
3. Add in the pepper, smoked paprika, saffron or turmeric, tomatoes, salt and pepper. Cook for 25 minutes until the peppers are soft, adding more water as necessary to keep the mixture moist.
4. Make four small wells in the tomato and pepper sauce, drop in the eggs, cover the pan and cook for 5 minutes until the whites of the egg are cooked.
5. Spoon two spicy tomato baked eggs onto each plate and serve with toasted bread.

These recipes are from the cookbook Happy, Healthy and Delicious (£9.99) by the Vegetarian Society [vegsoc.org/happyhealthydelicious](http://vegsoc.org/happyhealthydelicious)
Breast Cancer Care’s support services are here for you, whenever you need them.

**Find the right support for you**

**Call** 0345 077 1893
**Visit** breastcancercare.org.uk
**Email** services@breastcancercare.org.uk

**Someone to talk to**

**Helpline**
If you have a query about breast cancer, just want to talk things through or find more support, our nurses are at the end of a telephone line. Call our free, confidential Helpline on 0808 800 6000.

**Someone Like Me**
Someone Like Me won’t just put you in touch with someone else who’s been affected by primary breast cancer. With a network of 200 trained volunteers, we’ll find someone who understands your individual concerns.

**Online support**

**Website**
The information on our website is written by clinical specialists, so it’s reliable and up to date. Whether your question is about going through treatment or living with breast cancer, you’ll find the answer at breastcancercare.org.uk

**Forum**
Whether you’re going through treatment, moving forward or living with secondary breast cancer, you’ll find someone who understands what you’re going through on our popular online discussion Forum.

**Face to face**

**Moving Forward®**
Adapting to life after breast cancer treatment can be difficult. Moving Forward short courses take place throughout the UK to empower you to live better with and beyond breast cancer.

**Living with Secondary Breast Cancer**
A diagnosis of secondary breast cancer can mean adjusting to difficult changes. These monthly sessions provide information, support and the chance to meet other people with secondary breast cancer.

**Younger Women Together**
Come to a Younger Women Together event and meet around 30 other women under 45 who’ve been diagnosed with primary breast cancer. You’ll have the chance to talk, share and be yourself.
There are many ways to support Breast Cancer Care. Here are just a few.

**Get involved**

**Take on a 10k**

Join Team Breast Cancer Care for the BM10k in Brighton on 14 April 2019. With beautiful coastal views, electric crowd support and beach finish line, this 10k run will have you beaming with pride from start to finish. First-class support includes our mighty cheer points and post-race marquee. We’ll support you every step of the way.

Visit breastcancercare.org.uk/BM10k to secure your place.

**Step right up**

Take on a Pink Ribbon Walk and show your support with every step. Join us for Blenheim Palace and the Cotswolds on 18 May 2019, or Chatsworth and the Peak District on 15 June. Walk 10 or 20 miles through stunning countryside while raising money for everyone living with, through and beyond breast cancer. For more information go to breastcancercare.org.uk/pink-ribbon-walk

**Helping bands**

This pack of four popbands (£8) was developed by QVC for Breast Cancer Care. These soft and stretchy ‘no dent’ hair ties can also be worn on the wrist as a bracelet and come in bright and fun colours, including a hot pink version that features the ribbon symbol.

At least 60% of the sale price will go to Breast Cancer Care. Available from qvcuk.com/breastcancercare

**Pinspirational!**

A set of Hope, Strength and Unity pins (£39) features three designs made with sterling silver, including an anchor and a signature pink ribbon motif. Show your support with these pretty pins.
Anita Care  The most comprehensive range of breast forms, beautiful, supportive lingerie and stylish swimwear for all occasions. Designed to support women through all stages of treatment and recovery and to give confidence and comfort to those who have undergone breast surgery. Please call 01908 524048 or visit anita.com

Banbury Postiche  Est.1931 is an NHS approved supplier that offers a fantastic range of acrylic wigs with a next day delivery service available. We have a Customer Care team to support you, whatever your needs. Our purely wigs range is guaranteed to have a style to suit and delight you. Please take a look at our website wigsuk.com or call 01295 757 408.

Chemo Headwear  Award-winning luxurious handmade headscarves, bandannas, turbans and hats that will make you feel pretty and feminine. Offering a beautiful selection of Liberty prints, checks and plain fabrics that are all natural and breathable including cotton, silk, bamboo and cashmere.

10% discount when quoting ‘breastcancercare’ chemoheadwear.co.uk
Telephone: 01798 861501.

Jennifer Effie’s Hair Solutions  have created a bespoke hair replacement system for individuals that are undergoing cancer treatment. Our concept is to recreate how your hair looked before experiencing hair loss. Visit jehair.com to review our gallery, client testimonials and newspaper articles. Email: info@jehair.com Call: 020 3752 5089, 5 Upper Wimpole Street, London W1G 6BP.

Nicola Jane  aims to restore confidence and femininity after breast surgery. Whether you have had a mastectomy, a lumpectomy or a reconstruction, our post-surgery lingerie and swimwear collection combines comfort and practicality with on-trend, fashionable styles. Free returns and shops throughout the UK. Call 0345 265 7595 or visit nicolajane.com
**Womanzone ABC** Introducing a Revolutionary Custom Made Breast Form, offering a Personal and Intimate Fit. We can offer an unrivalled service of care and advice, including Made to Measure Swimwear, free fitting and pocketing service. To see our latest ranges of swimwear, lingerie and prostheses or to order an up-to-date brochure visit woman-zone.co.uk or call 01925 220 932. Visit the Woman Zone UK Facebook page for events and offers.

**Pebble UK** supply armsleeves, gloves and gauntlets for the treatment of lymphoedema. With over 100 designs to choose from, these beautiful garments are made from seam-free, breathable, moisture wick fabric containing aloe vera for skin-friendly softness, and a fine knit construction for a lightweight feel. Call 0800 433 4757 or visit pebbleuk.com

**Pink Ribbon Lingerie** is an award-winning family business. We sell post-surgery lingerie, swimwear and clothing from a wide range of brands, helping women feel beautiful following breast cancer. Save 10% on your next order using code VITA10. Visit pinkribbonlingeriel.co.uk or call 07958 824 410 with any queries.

**SILIMA.co.uk** Home to the highest-quality and most realistic post-surgery breast forms available, plus a range of stylish and supportive bras from £18 each. Silima is a trusted supplier to the NHS with 40+ years’ experience in mastectomy care.

Visit silima.co.uk or call 01295 220 524 to request a catalogue.

Breast Cancer Care does not endorse any product advertised on these pages. Speak to your specialist team before buying compression garments for lymphoedema.
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1. Visit vita.org.uk
2. Email vita@breastcancercare.org.uk
3. Call 0345 092 0808
4. Fill in this form and send it to the address below

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We’d love to keep you updated about our work and provide you with other opportunities to get involved.
To hear from Breast Cancer Care by email please fill in your details below:

Yes please, I’d like to hear from you by email

Email address

We never give your information to other organisations to use for their own purposes. To change your preferences, or find out more information on how we use your data, please view our privacy policy at breastcancercare.org.uk/privacy-cookies or by contacting supporter services on 0345 092 0800.