‘You think you should feel better’
After my cancer treatment finished
Why not get together with friends and family this summer?

Do something amazing for people affected by breast cancer by having an Afternoon Tea. It’s really easy to organise and our friendly Fundraising team are here to help.

Together, we can provide support for today and hope for the future.

Your free Afternoon Tea kit is waiting for you.

breastcancercare.org.uk/summer
0300 100 4442
At Vita, we always try to cover the issues that are most relevant to you, whether you’re going through breast cancer treatment now or were diagnosed months or even years ago. In this issue we tackle two biggies: diet and fatigue.

A recent survey by Breast Cancer Care revealed that around two-thirds of women feel there are conflicting messages online about diet and the risk of breast cancer returning. The same number say they’ve experienced anxiety about diet as a result of their cancer diagnosis.

It can be hard to pick your way through potentially inaccurate information to find the answers to your questions about diet. But help is at hand. We spoke to a dietitian about some common worries people have about diet after a breast cancer diagnosis, and asked her what the evidence says. You can find out more on page 14.

Fatigue is a very common side effect of breast cancer treatment, but it doesn’t always stop when treatment finishes. Everyone knows what it feels like to be tired now and again, but cancer-related fatigue is altogether different. It can make it difficult to do simple everyday tasks and may stop you doing the things you want to do.

Fatigue can have a number of different causes, but there are things you can do to help. On page 10 you’ll find 10 tips to help beat fatigue.

Gareth Fletcher
Editor
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In this issue

REAL LIVES
6 You think you should feel better
12 Breaking news
13 Friends reunited

FEATURES
8 Headwear for spring and summer
10 Ten tips to beat fatigue
14 Food for thought: diet and breast cancer
18 Breast cancer research: the lowdown
20 Dear diary…

REGULARS
4 Your letters and emails
5 News
16 Your questions answered
22 Recipes
24 Support for you
25 Get involved
Inbox

Your letters and emails

Dear Vita

Your Feeling the pressure article [Issue 37, winter 2018/19] reminded me of exactly how I felt when I finished 15 months of breast cancer surgeries and treatment. I realised I was never going to be ‘back to normal’ but that a new normal would be established.

Three years on, this year I turned 50 and I’m pretty happy with the new normal. I set myself the challenge of running a half marathon for the first time since diagnosis and also fulfilling a lifelong dream of climbing Kilimanjaro. I’ve now done both and raised over £1,500 for Breast Cancer Now!

Being kind to yourself, giving yourself time and setting little goals can eventually turn into achieving your biggest goals.

Jo

Dear Vita

Thank you for your piece on coping with pressure. I find no one ever mentions how much pressure there is on someone who is diagnosed. As a mum, girlfriend, daughter, sister I felt the pressure a lot because I did not want to upset my loved ones, but while I was protecting everyone else I was also trying to cope with issues myself.

Thanks to your amazing magazine I am now a lot more open with issues I feel I need to say. But one thing I have learnt through this journey is be kind to yourself – you’re only human after all.

Kate

Dear Vita

I had my breast off 11 years ago and only had one prosthesis, which as you can imagine was on its last legs.

After reading in Vita magazine about how to apply for a new one [Issue 36, autumn 2018] I asked my doctor if she would enquire for me. I have received a brand new one from the unit where I was treated. I had never been told about being able to claim for a new one every three years.

So thank you Vita, but for you I would not have a new prosthesis.

Christine

What’s on your mind?

Email vita@breastcancercare.org.uk
Write Fifth Floor, Ibex House, 42–47 Minories, London EC3N 1DY
Moving Forward Online
Breast Cancer Care is developing an online version of its popular Moving Forward course.

For the last 10 years, Moving Forward courses, in partnership with NHS hospitals, have been offering vital support to women with primary breast cancer after hospital treatment ends.

From tips to help you manage ongoing effects of treatment like fatigue to the lowdown on diet and exercise, the new online course will offer bite-sized information in an interactive and engaging format.

If you’ve recently finished, or are about to finish, hospital treatment for primary breast cancer and would like to find out how you could try this new digital service, let us know at breastcancercare.org.uk/move-forward

Have you heard?
Breast Cancer Care’s new podcast channel is sharing regular personal stories and talks with professionals about living with and beyond breast cancer.

Recent topics covered include living with secondary breast cancer, exercising after treatment, yoga and dealing with PTSD. They’re available on most podcast providers, and you can also listen to the latest podcasts and find out how to subscribe at breastcancercare.org.uk/pod

Distress over diet
Figures from Breast Cancer Care have revealed that conflicting information about diet and the risk of breast cancer returning is causing widespread confusion and anxiety.

Of over 1,500 women with breast cancer surveyed by the charity, 68% think there are conflicting messages about diet and breast cancer online. The same number (68%) say they experience anxiety about their diet as a result of their breast cancer diagnosis.

Dr Emma Pennery, Clinical Director at Breast Cancer Care, said: ‘It’s incredibly disheartening that so many women are facing confusion and anxiety about diet and recurrence after breast cancer.’

On page 14, we address the survey results and the topic of diet and breast cancer with the help of a dietician.
Suzanne was invited for routine breast screening for the first time at the age of 52.

‘I went for my first mammogram and was not really worried at all,’ says Suzanne, 56, from Manchester. ‘I was breast aware and checked my breasts on a fairly regular basis.’

A week later, a letter arrived asking her to go back for further assessment.

‘I was still not really worried,’ she says, ‘and went to that appointment not even slightly concerned.’

Suzanne had heard that women were more likely to be recalled after their first mammogram.

After more scans, however, Suzanne was told it looked likely she had cancer.

‘I tried to see the cancer as a temporary thing,’ she says. ‘I put my life on hold for six months, then when I came out of treatment I thought: great, time to get on with life. I tried to carry on as normally as I could. I’m not the sort of person who ever needs to ask for help.

‘And I was fine for 18 months or so. I was quite positive, but it came back to bite me.’

A year-and-a-half or so after her hospital treatment ended, Suzanne started experiencing anxiety and having panic attacks.

‘I really didn’t know what I was worrying about. You think you should be feeling better, happy and positive,’ says Suzanne, who burst into tears at an appointment with her oncologist when he asked how she was.

‘He helped me through this and pointed out that ending treatment in many ways can be harder than going through treatment.

‘He prescribed antidepressants, which I was reluctant to take at first. I got some counselling support as well. This helped me work out what my new normal was.

‘It was quite scary, and it might have helped if I had known before that this might happen.’
Five years on

Suzanne is now coming up to the five-year anniversary of her diagnosis in April 2014.

‘I’m much better than I was 18 months ago,’ she says.

‘I stopped work for a year, invested in looking after myself, working out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life and the relationships I wanted with those I love. I now have much healthier relationships with our family, friends and my body.

‘I know if I get to five years then statistically I’m good for many more. But I’m aware that you never really know whether it’s gone away. It’s not really fear, but an awareness.

Seeing a counsellor has been a great help.

‘Family and friends don’t always understand,’ she says. Suzanne is reminded of one friend who, when she heard about Suzanne's diagnosis, changed her Facebook profile picture to an old photo of her and Suzanne. ‘I’m not dying!’ she thought.

Suzanne doesn’t necessarily feel that cancer has changed her. ‘Cancer did not make me a better person,’ she says, ‘but I probably make better decisions. I still get stressed and frustrated by the small things, like if someone cuts me up when I’m driving. But now I’m able to recognise that those are small things.’

Silly things

In 2018, Suzanne was one of 32 models who appeared in Breast Cancer Care’s annual fundraising fashion show.

‘The Show was brilliant’ she says.

‘It was great to meet other women in so many different situations. I had never had any contact with younger women with breast cancer, and obviously the issues for them are very different.

‘I came away with a much better understanding of the different ways breast cancer can affect people.’

Does Suzanne have any advice for other women in her situation?

‘Have a support network that doesn’t just include family and friends,’ she says.

‘It could be an online forum, telephone support, face-to-face counselling or attending a course like Breast Cancer Care’s Moving Forward.

‘I just think it’s so important that you can talk about all the silly or daft things that you can’t do with friends and family.’

To find out more about the support that Breast Cancer Care offers, visit breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0808 800 6000.
Headscarves, bandanas, turbans and hats can be a great alternative to wigs if you’ve lost your hair because of chemotherapy, and can help protect your head from the sun in warmer months.

Choosing the right fabric, colour and style can help you stay comfortable when the temperature rises, and feel more confident in your look.

Bespoke dressmaker Claire Featherstone started Chemo Headwear (chemoheadwear.co.uk) after a client, who was having chemotherapy, asked her to make some turbans and bandannas.

‘Most of my clients have wigs,’ says Claire, ‘and many wear them for meetings or dinners out. But many people find them rather uncomfortable, hot and sweaty, so turn to more comfortable headscarves or hats.’

Be cool
Choosing the right fabric is essential as the days become warmer. For Claire, ‘keeping cool while looking cool’ is a priority.

‘Always choose natural fibres that are wickable,’ she says. Wickable means the fabric draws moisture away from the body, keeping you cool.

‘I would suggest cotton or bamboo fabrics, but definitely not synthetic fabrics like polyester.’

Choosing natural fibres such as cotton will help you stay cooler in warm weather
Make it personal
Hats, headscarves and turbans come in a wide variety of styles and colours.
‘It’s really helpful to try different styles on and see what suits you and what you feel comfortable in,’ says Claire.
‘Do you prefer a headscarf style, or is a stretchy jersey style more “you”?
‘It’s a question of finding the headwear that suits your face shape and your personal style.’

Match your wardrobe
Choosing the right style and colour can help you feel more confident with your new look, say Claire.
‘It’s worth looking at your wardrobe before choosing your headwear,’ she says. ‘If you wear a lot of print then choose a plain fabric; alternatively if your wardrobe is very plain then choosing a print could be a good idea.’
Claire also recommends thinking about your skin tone and eye colour.
‘Picking a blue, green, grey or brown print to pick out your eye colour will result in a flattering headwear choice.’

Six tips
for choosing the right headwear

1. Look for natural fibres, such as cotton, as this will keep you cooler.
2. If you can, try on different styles to see what suits you best.
3. Think about how your headwear will work with the rest of your wardrobe.
4. Picking a colour that will bring out your eye colour can be really flattering.
5. Once you’ve chosen your headwear, experiment with your looks.
6. Think about matching your headwear and your make-up. For example, if you’re going to wear red lipstick then pick a red headscarf or hat to complement it.

Accessorise
Some people feel more confident if attention is directed away from their hair. There are a number of ways of doing this. Jewellery such as earrings, necklaces, rings and brooches can attract attention.
‘Big earrings are flattering,’ says Claire. ‘A hoop or a pearl or a bit of sparkle will help complete your look.
‘Whatever headwear style you choose, a pair of sunglasses looks great. Push them up on top of your head when you’re inside. This makes your headwear look even more natural and part of you.’

You can find a list of headwear suppliers at breastcancercare.org.uk/headwearsuppliers
Turn to page 26 for a discount code for Chemo Headwear.
Fatigue, or extreme tiredness, is a very common side effect of breast cancer treatment, and one that can continue even after treatment has finished. Unlike general tiredness, fatigue doesn’t always go away after rest or sleep and can significantly affect you physically and emotionally. Many people find it difficult to do simple everyday tasks and can’t do the things they enjoy.

**Different causes**

Fatigue can have a number of different causes.

Most treatments for breast cancer can lead to fatigue. Surgery may leave you feeling tired because of the stress placed on your body and the time it takes to heal. Chemotherapy can lead to a lowered immune system and also changes to your eating patterns, which can make fatigue worse.

Travelling to and from hospital for regular treatments, such as radiotherapy, is likely to contribute to fatigue as well.

Coping with a cancer diagnosis and treatment can be very difficult emotionally, leaving you mentally exhausted. You may feel anxious, have trouble sleeping or feel depressed, which can make fatigue symptoms worse. And it’s very common for these feelings to continue after treatment as you process what has happened to you.

**‘I thought I’d be back to 100% after treatment’**

Alyson was diagnosed with breast cancer in May 2014, and began experiencing fatigue during chemotherapy.

‘I had so much less energy and it didn’t matter how much sleep I got,’ she says. ‘I was tired all the time and just didn’t have the stamina I had before. Radiotherapy was a tiring two-hour round trip for 10 minutes of treatment, so that added to it.’

Alyson thought her fatigue would go away when treatment stopped. ‘I always assumed it would get better with time, and that after treatment I’d be back to 100%, but I still have low energy levels. I’m still taking hormone therapy and I know fatigue can be a side effect from the drugs, so I’m hoping it will improve when I finish taking them.’

She does regular exercise and walks every day to try to improve her symptoms. ‘I think it does help. I’ve also started doing pilates and yoga. The fatigue is better than it was, but I’m still not as resilient.’

Alyson is a Someone Like Me volunteer for Breast Cancer Care, and regularly talks to people experiencing fatigue. ‘It’s definitely a recurring theme, so I know I’m not alone. My advice to others is to keep active, even if it’s just a short walk around the village like I did. And don’t worry about letting people down – there’s a reason for it, and people will understand.

‘Most importantly, be kind to yourself – if you can’t manage an activity or a trip, don’t force yourself.’

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10 tips to beat fatigue

Kate Parsons asks why so many people experience fatigue after a breast cancer diagnosis, and what can be done to help.

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‘Most importantly, be kind to yourself – if you can’t manage an activity or a trip, don’t force yourself.’
10 tips to help you manage fatigue

1. **Tell your GP or nurse**
   Sometimes fatigue has a treatable cause, so tell your GP or nurse how you’re feeling. For example, anaemia can be treated with iron supplements.

2. **Keep a fatigue diary**
   Record your level of fatigue every day, from 1 (no fatigue) to 10 (extreme fatigue). This can help you notice any patterns in your energy levels, and plan your activities. See page 20 for more tips on keeping a diary.

3. **Do some exercise**
   There’s good evidence that regular physical activity can help reduce fatigue. You could try walking, cycling or swimming.

4. **Keep hydrated**
   Being dehydrated can make you feel tired. Aim to drink six to eight glasses of water a day.

5. **Try relaxation techniques**
   There are many good relaxation videos, podcasts, CDs or apps available.

6. **Rest, but limit your naps**
   Get plenty of rest between your activities, but keep naps to less than half an hour and avoid taking them late in the afternoon, so that your sleep at night is less likely to be affected.

7. **Eat well**
   Choose foods that give you energy over a period of time, like nuts and cereals.

8. **Accept help**
   Accept practical help from other people and let them know when you need it.

9. **Make a ‘to do’ list**
   This can help you remember things and prioritise tasks. Only do the things that absolutely have to be done each day.

10. **Get support**
    There’s some evidence that being well supported may help reduce fatigue. Think about the kind of support that would suit you, whether it’s a local support group or individual counselling.
My immediate thought was: “I’m going to die,” says Christine, 62, who was diagnosed with breast cancer a week before Christmas 2015. “That tiny lump becomes enormous in your mind,” she says.

Christine had discovered the lump in her breast while on holiday in Cuba the month before.

After hearing the news of her diagnosis, she then faced the task of telling her children.

Close-knit family

While you’ll find plenty of guidance online about talking to children about cancer, it’s almost exclusively aimed at people with younger children. But like many women in her situation, Christine’s children were by now grown-up.

“My daughter was 34, and my son approaching 30,” she says.

“We’re a close-knit family and very much into Christmas. My daughter is local and my son and his fiancée were coming down from London the day after my diagnosis. He didn’t know about the lump or the hospital tests I’d had.”

Her son was due to arrive around three o’clock, and Christine felt on edge as she waited. “He arrived a bit early, but my daughter wasn’t there yet,” she says. “I sat him down and told him. He took it in his stride. Then my daughter arrived. She cried when I told her, and they both just looked at each other.

“Then she said: “You’ll probably rock the bald look, Mum!”

Christine admits her son may have been somewhat in denial about the cancer at the time, and her daughter later witnessed Christine dealing with complications after her mastectomy. “In the end they were great and took it really well,” she says.

Feeling human again

On the day of her diagnosis, Christine’s breast care nurse told her: ‘This is your cancer, not anyone else’s. It’s unique to you.’

She advised Christine not to go looking things up online, and handed her a copy of Breast Cancer Care’s Primary breast cancer information pack.

Christine later found that services including Moving Forward and Someone Like Me helped take away some of the isolation she felt. “It’s a very lonely place when you’ve got cancer,” she says. ‘Breast Cancer Care made me feel like a real human being again.’

Christine spoke to a Someone Like Me volunteer over the phone when she had concerns about going back to work.

“Someone Like Me was amazing,” she says. ‘I was worried about tiredness and getting back into a routine. Whether I’d be able to cope, whether I’d fit in again. She told me the feelings I had were perfectly normal.’

Christine went back to work, as a civil servant at the Animal and Plant Health Agency, on a phased return at the end of 2016.

“There is life after treatment,” she says.

‘Take one step at a time. You’re not the person you were before, but that doesn’t mean you’re a lesser person. And remember; it’s your cancer and nobody else’s.’
Decades after they went to school together, Nadeen Lister and Lorraine Rackham were reunited through their breast cancer experience.

Nadeen, 46, and Lorraine, 45, have known each other since they went to the same comprehensive school in Stanley, County Durham. ‘Lorraine was in the year below,’ says Nadeen, ‘but I knew her to say hello to.’

The pair continued to say hello when Lorraine worked in the local supermarket. But they lost touch after Lorraine moved to Manchester.

A shock
Lorraine was the first to find out she had breast cancer.

She’d felt a lump while putting her bra on. Lorraine, whose mother died from breast cancer, already knew she carried the altered BRCA1 gene, which increases the risk of the disease.

‘My head was all over the place,’ says Lorraine, ‘and got a message from Nadeen. She dropped it in that she knew what I was going through, and that she was going through the same.’

Sharing experiences
Nadeen found out about Lorraine’s diagnosis by chance, after speaking to someone who knew both women. She decided to get in touch.

‘I was slightly ahead of her,’ says Lorraine. ‘She’d ask me questions and I’d answer them as best I could. I just told her how it was for me.’

Wonder Women
Nadeen and Lorraine both attended a Breast Cancer Care Younger Women Together event in Newcastle.

Meeting other women in the same situation was a benefit of the event, says Nadeen. ‘When you’re diagnosed you think: “Why me?” But then you realise you’re not the only one.’

I was a bit reserved at first,’ says Lorraine. ‘But in one of the groups I started talking about what I’d been through for the first time.’

After the event, the pair didn’t head straight home.

‘We left our bags at the hotel and went to see the Ladyboys of Bangkok show,’ says Nadeen. She felt the name of the tour was just too appropriate: Wonder Women.

Friends reunited
Find out more about Younger Women Together at breastcancercare.org.uk or call the Helpline on 0808 800 6000.

‘When you’re diagnosed you think: Why me?’

‘It turned out we lived about ten minutes’ walk away from each other,’ says Nadeen.

The pair met at Lorraine’s house. Lorraine, who had started chemotherapy, was able to tell Nadeen what to expect.
In a recent survey by Breast Cancer Care, 68% of women said they had experienced anxiety about diet as a result of their breast cancer diagnosis.

The internet abounds with advice on what to eat if you’ve had cancer. But how much of it should be taken with a pinch of salt?

**A rabbit hole**

‘There’s so much conflicting information and people just don’t know where to turn to for good evidence-based information,’ says Ravneet Phalora, a senior specialist dietitian at the Royal Marsden.

A Google search for ‘breast cancer and diet’ does bring up some reliable information from organisations like Breast Cancer Care. But it also gives lots of other suggested questions, such as ‘Which foods kill cancer cells?’ and ‘What foods should cancer patients avoid?’ And clicking on these links brings up a confusing array of different suggestions.

‘There’s so much unproven and inaccurate information out there about whether certain foods can impact the risk of breast cancer returning, we know finding clear-cut answers online can feel like going down a rabbit hole,’ says Dr Emma Pennery, Breast Cancer Care’s Clinical Director.

So how should you know what to eat after a cancer diagnosis?

**Cherry picking**

‘Two of the big things people ask me about are dairy and soya,’ says Ravneet, ‘and whether they should be cutting those things out of their diet.’

Ravneet points out that often findings from small studies get reported, and these can be conflicting and confusing.

‘Often headlines will cherry pick small studies,’ she says, ‘and sometimes they’re not even done in humans, they might be done in mice. ‘But the biggest studies looking at dairy show that dairy’s probably neutral in the diet, it’s not associated with breast cancer risk. And the same with soya. The biggest studies show soya is not linked to an increased risk of breast cancer certainly at normal dietary levels.’

In other words, there’s no strong evidence that dairy or soya in the diet cause breast cancer, nor is there evidence to recommend people cut these out of their diet if they’ve been diagnosed.

Despite this, it’s not unusual for women to worry that their diet might have contributed to their breast cancer.

‘At the moment there is no evidence that a particular dietary habit has caused someone’s cancer,’ says Ravneet. ‘Trying not to blame yourself is really important.’

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Food for thought

**diet and breast cancer**

What to eat after breast cancer treatment is a topic that causes a lot of worry. With the help of a dietitian, we ask why it can lead to such confusion.
Weight gain

Another major area of worry for women who’ve had breast cancer is weight gain during or after treatment, and how to lose weight afterwards. ‘Often it can be quite a surprise if you gain weight,’ says Ravneet.

But weight gain is common and can have a number of causes, from side effects of some drugs that can increase appetite to being less active during treatment. ‘The main things to try and look at would be your portion control, and keeping as physically active as you can,’ recommends Ravneet.

‘Avoid things that are full of empty calories like sugary drinks and snacks. Try to fill up on foods such as fruits and vegetables, and foods that are high in fibre which will help you feel nice and full.

‘Try to limit things that are very high in calories – so that’s foods that are high in saturated fat like full-fat dairy products. Alcohol is also very high in calories, so limit alcohol as much as possible while also considering your quality of life.’

Ravneet stresses that people shouldn’t worry about trying to lose weight while having treatment. ‘We want people to manage their weight as best as they can during treatment,’ she says. ‘But there’s good evidence you can lose weight after cancer treatment if needed.’

Strike a balance

Is it possible to make any recommendations about diet after treatment?

‘While maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active can help reduce the risk of the cancer coming back,’ says Dr Emma Pennery, ‘it’s important to remember research on the impact of specific foods is simply not strong enough to make solid recommendations.’

The best advice seems to be to eat a healthy balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables; wholegrain varieties of foods like pasta and bread; some lower-fat dairy foods or alternatives; and a small amount of unsaturated fat.

If you have any worries about your diet, you can ask to see a dietitian.

‘Ask your breast care nurse or treatment team whether you can have access to a dietitian,’ says Ravneet. ‘Or you can ask your GP to be referred.’

Follow Ravneet on Instagram: @TheIndianDietitian

For information on diet after treatment, try Breast Cancer Care’s Diet and breast cancer booklet. Order a copy at breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0808 800 6000.
Your questions answered
Breast Cancer Care’s experts answer your questions about breast cancer and its treatments

Why do I keep forgetting things?

Q I started having problems with my memory during chemotherapy. I finished chemo six months ago but I’m still forgetful. I’m now taking tamoxifen. Why am I still having this problem?

A Some people find it difficult to concentrate and feel more forgetful following cancer treatment. Although it’s often called ‘chemo brain’ or ‘chemo fog’, some people have changes to their memory and concentration even if they don’t have chemotherapy.

The shock of the diagnosis, constant appointments and side effects from treatment can all affect normal thinking. Hormone therapy may also have an effect on memory. Not sleeping well, fatigue, anxiety, stress and any menopausal symptoms you may have as a result of taking tamoxifen can also play a part.

Being more forgetful can have a big impact on your daily life, but most people find their memory improves gradually over time.

Knowing you’re not alone can help. You may find it useful to talk to someone else going through the same thing, either through the Someone Like Me service or the online Forum.

Looking after your mind as well as your body is important but can be difficult. You can find a Mental health toolkit at breastcancercare.org.uk/mental-health-toolkit

What can help my joint pain?

Q I’ve been taking letrozole for a year and am suffering with joint pains. What can I do to help?

A Many people experience joint pain when taking letrozole. For some people it can really affect their quality of life.

Taking regular pain relief, particularly anti-inflammatory pain relief, may help. Check with your doctor before taking this kind of medication.

Gentle exercise, such as walking and stretching, may help relieve stiffness in your joints.

Maintaining a healthy weight will also help reduce stress on the joints.

Let your treatment team know about your joint pain so you can be properly assessed.

Letrozole is a type of hormone therapy used to treat postmenopausal women. It belongs to a group of drugs called aromatase inhibitors. For some people, switching from one hormone therapy drug to another might help joint pain and stiffness, so your doctor may suggest this. They can also refer you to a pain management clinic or for physiotherapy if appropriate.
Q I’ve been referred for a palliative care assessment, having been diagnosed with secondary breast cancer in the lungs. I feel pretty well at the moment so why do I need this?

A Many people think of palliative care as being only about end-of-life treatment, and are often surprised or worried when it’s mentioned as being part of their care. It’s often called palliative and supportive care, and also focuses on controlling symptoms such as pain, breathlessness and fatigue.

As well as helping manage physical symptoms, it can help you and the people closest to you deal with the psychological, social and spiritual effects of secondary breast cancer. Palliative care is often introduced soon after a diagnosis of secondary breast cancer and continues alongside any medical treatment. Evidence suggests the earlier people with secondary breast cancer are introduced to palliative care, the better their quality of life.

Palliative care usually involves a team of healthcare professionals such as specialist nurses, doctors, social workers, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. Your individual needs and those of your family will be assessed by the doctor or nurse who sees you, so they can plan any care you may need.

Why have I been offered palliative care?

Q I live in a small community in a rural area. I’d like some support, but I don’t want everyone knowing my business. What kind of help is available?

A Breast Cancer Care has a number of confidential services, which might suit your needs while allowing you to keep your privacy. You can call our free Helpline on 0808 800 6000 if you have a query or want to talk things through. It’s open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm.

If you’d prefer to get answers to your questions in writing, the Ask Our Nurses email service could be for you.

Someone Like Me can put you in touch, by phone or email, with someone else who’s experienced primary breast cancer. Our volunteers can listen, offer emotional support, talk about their experience, and support you in making decisions.

The online discussion Forum is available day or night for support. And our free mobile app BECCA provides daily hints, tips and strategies to help people adjust to life beyond treatment.

If you have a breast care nurse, they may be able to tell you about suitable support in your area.

How can I get help without other people finding out?

Q
Breast cancer research
the lowdown

As Breast Cancer Care and Breast Cancer Now have joined forces, we caught up with Director of Research Simon Vincent to find out about the types of research the charity is funding.

With more than 380 researchers across the UK and Ireland – from Southampton to Aberdeen – it might seem a monumental task to keep track of the different strands of breast cancer research happening right now. But as Simon Vincent explains, the portfolio he oversees has a clear focus.

‘All the research we do has to be guided by one of the three areas of our strategy,’ says Simon.

These are: preventing breast cancer, stopping women and men dying from breast cancer, and improving the lives of people affected by breast cancer.

Understanding the causes

How do you go about preventing breast cancer?

‘One of the key ways of stopping breast cancer is understanding what causes it,’ says Simon.

‘One of our largest grants supports the Generations Study, led by Professor Tony Swerdlow at the Institute of Cancer Research, which is looking at the causes of breast cancer in three main areas.’

The first is genetics. What are the changes in our genes, which we either inherit or which happen at some point in life, that might lead to breast cancer?

‘The second is looking at things in your “health history”, as Simon calls it, that you can’t necessarily do much about. ‘For instance, understanding the link between having children or breastfeeding and developing breast cancer.’

The third area of research looks at things we can control, like body weight and being active.

Of course, there’s little point in understanding what causes breast cancer if you do nothing about it.

‘It’s a mix of understanding the factors that cause breast cancer and doing research on how you can intervene to stop breast cancer from developing,’ says Simon.

An important ambition

While more people than ever survive breast cancer, the disease is still responsible for around 11,500 deaths a year in the UK.

The aim of Breast Cancer Care and Breast Cancer Now is that by 2050 everyone who develops breast cancer will live, and live well. So how do you achieve such a goal?

‘That’s two key things,’ says Simon. ‘One is treating primary breast cancer effectively so it doesn’t spread. And the second is finding ways to keep it under control if it does spread.

‘It’s getting down to the molecular level and looking at what’s going on in a breast cell that turns it into a cancer cell.’

‘The hope is that knowledge of the differences between cancer cells and normal cells could pave the way towards designing new treatments or finding better ways of using existing treatments.

‘A lot of research that we fund in laboratories across the country is looking at this,’ says Simon.

‘Sometimes it’s very early stages: we’re not quite sure where this research is going, but we’re curious to find out more.

‘Sometimes the researchers are at the next stage where they’re saying: Could our understanding of how breast cells change and grow be a key to developing new drugs to treat breast cancer?’

‘However, it’s not just about drugs.'
‘The challenge of understanding why some individual cancer cells stay put and some spread to other parts of the body is a big question,’ says Simon.

‘Our scientists are at the forefront of trying to spot the mutations that arise in cells that have spread and trying to work out what that means for the next round of breast cancer treatments.’

**Improving lives**

Developing new drugs is all well and good. But it’s no good if those drugs are unbearable, says Simon. So some research is looking at helping women live with side effects of their treatments.

A study led by Professor Deborah Fenlon at the University of Southampton is looking at using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to help women manage hot flushes caused by their breast cancer treatment.

‘At the moment CBT on the NHS is delivered by trained psychologists,’ says Simon. ‘But can you give breast care nurses enough knowledge and training to be able to deliver that CBT as effectively? Because if you can, that opens up that opportunity to many more women.’

**Unanswered questions**

Simon explains that it’s important to fund a mix of long- and short-term research.

‘Long-term funding allows researchers to tackle the big, unanswered questions in breast cancer, while short-term funding helps ensure a broad range of questions surrounding breast cancer are explored,’ he says.

A good example of long-term research is the Generations Study, mentioned earlier.

‘This has been going for nearly 15 years, and it’s following 113,000 women for potentially up to 40 years,’ says Simon.

The study collects a huge amount of data from this large group of women, a proportion of whom will, inevitably, develop breast cancer.

‘Once you’ve got a large enough group that have developed breast cancer – and we have now that it’s been running for nearly 15 years – you then try to map the differences between those that do have breast cancer and those that don’t.’

These differences could be the key to figuring out the causes of breast cancer.

But there are other interesting findings coming out of Generations Study.

‘It is becoming increasingly clear that breast cancer before the menopause is in many ways quite a different disease to breast cancer after the menopause,’ says Simon. ‘Over the next few years we expect to see a lot more information coming out of the Generations Study which will pin down some of those differences. Some of it will be reinforcing ideas already flying around. But I think there will be new possibilities coming out as well, which is something we’re very excited about.’

To find out more about breast cancer research, visit [breastcancernow.org](http://breastcancernow.org)
Dear diary...

Rachel Rawson looks at why keeping a diary or journal could be beneficial when you’ve had breast cancer.

In the age of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, it might sometimes seem that we’ve all been programmed to share every thought or feeling.

But have you ever thought about keeping a physical journal or diary? Something that’s just for you, and not meant to be read by anyone else?

The idea might seem a bit daunting, and you might not know where to start. But there are several reasons why keeping a diary may help you when you’ve had breast cancer.

**Keeping a record**

There are many different ways you can use a journal or diary.

One reason for keeping a diary might be to record symptoms such as fatigue or pain, along with what makes them better or worse.

For example, if you’re experiencing fatigue you might record what it feels like, how much sleep you’ve had, what activities you’ve done and whether they made the fatigue better or worse.

This can help you see what might improve things or what’s not working for you. It can also help you talk to your treatment team at your next appointment.

**Setting goals**

If you have goals that you want to achieve, writing a journal can not only help you hit those goals, but more importantly can also remind you how far you have come.

An example of a goal might be getting back to exercise after treatment.

When a goal feels unattainable, breaking it down into bite-sized chunks and keeping a note of what you have achieved day-to-day can make it feel more manageable.

**Thought and feelings**

For many women after a diagnosis of breast cancer, writing regularly can help them express their thoughts and feelings.

Writing down the things that worry us can make them seem more manageable. This in turn can reduce stress and help you to see what you might need in terms of support. It can also help you clear your head and make important connections between thoughts and feelings.

This type of writing is often referred to as expressive writing. Instead of jotting down lists of symptoms or side effects, you write about how you feel.

You’re free to write about whatever you like. But you might want to start with something that has been worrying you or something that has recently appeared in your dreams.

**Making a start**

A journal and its purpose will be different for everyone, and the outcomes can vary widely, but they are almost always very positive.

People approach keeping a journal or diary in a variety of ways. If you’re...
getting started, don’t set any rules and just see what comes naturally. Feel free to express yourself in any way that feels comfortable for you. For example, some people find that sketching and drawing in their journal helps them express emotions.

**Choosing the right diary**

Choose something really nice to write in. This might be a day-by-day diary, a plain journal or something that you have completely customised. An engaging cover will mean that you’re more likely to pick it up and use it.

Kikki.K (kikki-k.com) stocks some really beautiful diaries and journals with a wide range of cover options, from personal monograms to inspiring quotes.

If you really want to go to town, GettingPersonal.co.uk can personalise any ring-bound journal or diary with anything from a photo to an inspirational saying.

If you’re looking for something a bit simpler, Asda stocks a good range of plain notebooks that might fit the bill.

**Five tips to get you started**

1. Start small. A few minutes each day will help you to reflect and find some balance.

2. Write when you feel like it. If keeping your journal starts to feel like ‘a task’ or ‘work’, don’t force yourself to do it.

3. Don’t worry about grammar or spelling. Remember, your journal is just for you.

4. Get creative. Your journal doesn’t have to be for writing only, and you can include anything you like. Try adding in drawings, poems, quotes or other creative projects.

5. Try some writing prompts if you’re not sure what to write about. A few suggestions include: ‘Today I felt grateful for…’, ‘I am feeling worried about…’, or ‘At my next appointment, I hope that…’
1. Line a brownie tin with baking paper.
2. Place the butter, milk chocolate and golden syrup into a large bowl and melt – short bursts in the microwave is quickest. Then add the crushed biscuits and Maltesers and stir well until all the ingredients are combined.
3. Pour into your prepared baking tin evenly and press out so that the mixture is flat. Press your leftover Malteasers evenly across your mixture to decorate. Drizzle your melted white chocolate on top if using.
4. Cover and place in the fridge to set. Your mixture will need a minimum of 4 hours to set (you can eat any leftover Malteasers while you wait), but is best left overnight. Once set, slice into squares ready to sell at your Afternoon Tea!

Thanks to Laura from Gloucester for this recipe.
It wouldn’t be an Afternoon Tea without scones. For a special treat, a spoonful of thick cream makes them extra luscious.

Makes about 12 scones

For the blueberry jam:
- 400g BerryWorld blueberries
- 200g caster sugar
- zest and juice of 1 large orange

For the scones:
- 150g BerryWorld blueberries
- 350g self-raising flour
- 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- 100g salted butter, cubed
- 50g caster sugar
- zest of 1 orange
- 175ml buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon milk

1. First make the blueberry jam. Place the blueberries, sugar, orange zest and juice in a large heavy-based pan. Allow the sugar to dissolve over a medium heat then increase the heat and boil for around 20 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent it catching on the bottom of the pan. Allow to cool a little then spoon into sterilised jars. Cover with a lid when completely cool and store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

2. To make the scones, preheat oven 220°C/200°C fan. Wash and pat dry the blueberries, then dust in a little flour.

3. Sift the flour and bicarbonate of soda into a large bowl. Rub in the butter using your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.

4. Stir in the caster sugar, orange zest and blueberries. Make a well in the centre and pour in the buttermilk and milk, then mix with a knife until you have a soft dough. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead very lightly. Pat into a round 4cm thick.

5. Cut out scones using a 5cm fluted cutter, and place on a lightly greased baking tray. Brush the tops with a little milk.


7. Serve split in half topped with the blueberry jam.

Tip: If you haven’t got buttermilk, use ordinary milk with a squeeze of lemon juice or 1 teaspoon of cider vinegar to sour it.
Breast Cancer Care’s support services are here for you, whenever you need them.

Support for you

**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.
Get involved

There are many ways to support Breast Cancer Care. Here are just a few.

Be inspired

Sign up to a challenge for Breast Cancer Care, and we’ll support you every step of the way.

Along with her daughter, Rebecca took on the Colour Run after being diagnosed with breast cancer in January 2017. ‘We decided to train and take on the Colour Run as I really wanted to give something back to the amazing charity that supported me through my treatment,’ says Rebecca.

From a training plan and running vest to fundraising support, we’ll make sure you have everything you need to get to the finish line. And if you secure your own place in the event, you can set your own fundraising and raise as much as you feel able to support people facing breast cancer.

Visit breastcancercare.org.uk/get-involved

Show support

Celebrate Breast Cancer Awareness Month in style this October at The Breast Cancer Care Show. Join us to celebrate the courage and strength of our models, all of whom have had a breast cancer diagnosis. The Show London on 3 October and The Show Scotland on 24 October will be full of fun, fashion and fizz. Buy your tickets at breastcancercare.org.uk/theshow

Every step you take

The Pink Ribbon Walks, in association with Skechers, are back for 2019 and we have some exciting new ways everyone can take on a walking challenge.

Walk with us at one of our long-standing events this summer. We’ll be at Blenheim Palace and the Cotswolds on Saturday 18 May, or Chatsworth and the Peak District on Saturday 15 June.

Walk your way and create your own walking challenge. Set the date, choose your location and come together with friends and family.

Walk 500,000 steps across May and June. That’s almost one step for every woman currently living with breast cancer in the UK.

Visit breastcancercare.org.uk/prws
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.

Cool and Beautiful Nightwear  Cool, ultra-feminine, 100% cotton mastectomy nightdresses. Discreetly pocketed for soft prostheses, with plenty of fabric in the skirt to allow for extra comfort. Designed as a result of personal experience and made in the UK. Now available up to size 22 from coolandbeautiful.com or call 01568 750 011.

Drain Dollies are bags to contain drains following breast surgery, allowing you to carry them with comfort and dignity. Drain dollies come in a variety of styles, designed by Charlotte Wood who had a double mastectomy aged 26. 10% of each sale goes directly to fund breast cancer research draindollies.co.uk

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, lumpectomy or 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

To advertise here please email us at vita@breastcancercare.org.uk
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

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.

Suzie M Mastectomy Bras I had cancer and had a mastectomy. I now make mastectomy bras with built-in, lightweight prosthesis for comfort and a more confident feel. Please check my website suziemillette.com or telephone 07947 484 909 for required side, size, style, and colours. Stock will change often.

Suburban Turban offers stylish, fashionable headwear and accessories for women experiencing hair loss. The collection offers styles for all occasions – from beautifully simple, super-soft jersey hats to chic berets and sparkling cocktail hats. We also offer a range of natural skincare products, chosen for their gentle, soothing benefits. To shop the range go to suburbanturban.com or call 01306 640 123.

TenderCush products are especially designed to offer comfort and support following breast cancer surgery. Our Shaped Cushion comes in gorgeous ‘cuddle-soft’ fabric with a removable cover. Our fab patented Shoulder Bag offers discrete support when out and about, and looks and operates like an ordinary bag. Available from tendercush.co.uk or call 07980 470 072.

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.

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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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.

Take on a Pink Ribbon Walk challenge in association with Skechers and we’ll support you with every step while you do something amazing for everyone affected by breast cancer.

For more information visit breastcancercare.org.uk/prws