

# Living with secondary breast cancer topics

A diagnosis of secondary breast cancer can mean adjusting to difficult changes in your life. Our Living with Secondary Breast Cancer meet-ups have been designed to give you the chance to meet and share experiences with other people living with a secondary diagnosis and get the information and support you need. Each month we discuss a different topic.

## Benefits and Financial Assistance

Understanding your entitlement to benefits and the process for claiming them can be complicated and confusing. In this session an expert will talk you through the most relevant benefits and the eligibility criteria and give you plenty of opportunity to ask questions. You'll also be told how you can access support to help you make any relevant claims.

## Cancer Related Fatigue

Fatigue (extreme tiredness) is a common side effect of secondary breast cancer and its treatments – this session will help you to understand what causes it, how it affects you and what you can do to manage its impact on your life. It will also give you the tools to explain your fatigue to those around you so that they can better understand and support you.

## Hair and Scalp Care

Hair loss can be a distressing and very visible side effect of some cancer treatments, and as someone with secondary breast cancer you may even be losing your hair for the second or third time. This session will help you to understand how your treatment affects your hair and scalp and how you can best look after them during and after hair loss. You'll also learn about different options available to you, from wigs to headscarves and hats, and find out where you can access more support (eg a local HeadStrong service).

## Lymphoedema

This session will give you an opportunity to ask questions about lymphoedema, whether you are already living with it or wanting to minimise your risk. An expert will explain what causes lymphoedema and signs and symptoms to look out for, as well as how the condition can be managed.

## Pain Management

Many people with secondary breast cancer live with ongoing pain. This session will help you to understand what causes pain and the different ways it can be managed. We'll address the myths that exist around pain relief medications and there will be plenty of opportunity to ask questions. We'll also explore other strategies which can help such as relaxation and make sure you know where to go for further help and support.

## Palliative & Supportive Care

Evidence shows that people benefit from having access to palliative and supportive care as early as possible after a diagnosis of secondary breast cancer. At the same time we know that these can be frightening words to hear and that services are widely misunderstood. This session will explain the aims of palliative and supportive care and how it can help to meet your physical, psychological, spiritual and social needs, from diagnosis onwards. There will be plenty of time to talk about your fears or concerns in a relaxed and supportive environment.

## Physical Activity

A practical, and usually fun, session which will give you the chance to try out some different exercises. You'll also have the chance to discuss any concerns about exercising or any barriers you face as well as learning about the benefits exercise brings for both physical and mental health and how it can help in managing some side effects of treatment.

## Side Effects

Many treatments for secondary breast cancer have side effects that can affect your daily life to varying degrees. In this session you'll have access to an expert (usually a Clinical Nurse Specialist) who can explain why side effects occur and suggest different ways in which they can be managed. It's an interactive session, led by your questions, and aims to equip you with information, techniques you can use to manage side effects and knowledge about local support services that may be able to help you.

## Overview day

Once a year in each location we run a full day event which provides an update on available treatments, information on fatigue or the benefits of physical activity, details of additional support and the chance to participate in a relaxation session.