Welcome to Vita

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. This year, Breast Cancer Care is highlighting that its free support services and information are ‘Here from day one’.

On page 11, Nicky Sherwood, one of the faces of the new campaign, tells us how Breast Cancer Care’s services made a huge difference to her from the start. And for a glimpse of what the campaign looks like, turn to the back page to see an advert starring Nicky.

Elsewhere in the magazine, we address a subject that affects many women – the ongoing side effects of hormone therapies. We know from research that a large number of people prescribed hormone treatments, such as tamoxifen, stop taking them early because they struggle to cope with the side effects. But we also know that talking to a healthcare professional could help them find a solution. Turn to page 14 to find out why nobody should suffer alone with hormone therapy side effects.

And on the fashion pages, we look at choosing clothes after breast surgery, including tips for women who haven’t had reconstruction. Whether you wear a prosthesis or not, you’ll hopefully find some useful tips on choosing clothing that suits you on page 6.

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Dear Vita
I was diagnosed with breast cancer in September 2013 aged 42. I was absolutely devastated as I didn’t expect it at all.
I live in a very rural area so my processes of going through my operation, appointments and radiotherapy meant a lot of travelling and staying away from home. It was only a year later that I picked up a Vita magazine and sent away for a subscription.
Vita is so factual and true! All the women that you interview or who write in have the exact same problems and life changes as me, so I didn’t feel like I was stupid or being paranoid about my symptoms, feelings and worries. It really made me feel like I wasn’t alone in the world and that we all are dealing with the same issues.
I am in a very happy place now as my side effects are being managed and I am living life to the fullest. I still try to do everything I can but do sit down when I need to get that second wind!
I am busy organising a Strawberry Tea in my local village hall to raise awareness and money for a few charities that have been there to help me through my battle. I am tired and worried it won’t be a success but then I am also overwhelmed with the generosity of raffle prizes and donations. The only hiccup that I have experienced while doing this is the fact I have to tell people over and over about my breast cancer diagnosis. Cancer is such a horrible word and I could feel that negativity creeping back in. But like many of the women in your magazine I have learned to push it aside and be positive!
Thank you Vita and keep up the good work.
Gillian

Our article about Baldly Beautiful chemotherapy make-up tips caused some discussion on Facebook. Here are some responses from readers...

‘I think it is great for girls to be able to put on make-up and look great, but during my 6 months of chemo I didn’t have the energy to wash my face some days.’ Patricia

‘It’s awful losing your hair and I hate to say the cliché but it does grow back! Enjoy the wigs, I did.’ Patty

‘A bit of make-up does wonders for your self-confidence. My hair is slowly coming back but I’m liking the short look.’ Jenny

‘Stunning!’ Angela

Get in touch with Vita
Tweet @Vita_mag
Email vita@breastcancercare.org.uk
Write Vita magazine, Breast Cancer Care, 5–13 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0NS
Don’t forget to visit Vita online...
www.vita.org.uk

Top tweet
Lots to read in new edition of @Vita_mag – reading time from London to Leicester by train #magazine #cancer
@L15A_FRENCH
Every little tin

Can you Give a Tin a Home? Finding homes for Breast Cancer Care’s collection tins is a great way to be in the heart of your community, raising vital money to support people facing breast cancer.

Simply place collection tins in your local area anywhere that change is given, such as your local newsagent, and pop back every six weeks or so to collect the money. It’s easy and flexible so will fit in with your everyday routine.

For more information, email volunteer.hub@breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0114 263 6120.

News and views

For your information

Breast Cancer Care’s booklet Living with lymphoedema after breast cancer has been highly commended at the 2015 British Medical Association Patient Information Awards. The annual BMA awards recognise accessible, well-designed and clinically balanced patient information.

The booklet explains what lymphoedema is, how it can affect your life and how it can be successfully managed. As well as clearly explaining the physical effects it may cause, where and how it can be treated, ways to manage the symptoms and how to deal with any complications, the booklet also features the experiences of people living with the condition.

To order a copy of Living with lymphoedema after breast cancer, visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk/publications or call 0808 800 6000.
Survey shows most women suffer side effects

A YouGov survey for Breast Cancer Care showed that most women diagnosed with breast cancer (89%) suffer from often debilitating side effects following treatment. The survey of 409 people found that 22% of women treated for breast cancer went on to be diagnosed with lymphoedema, a swelling in the hand, arm or chest area that can occur after surgery to the lymph nodes under the arm.

Other side effects reported include fatigue, nausea, peeling skin, loss of fingernails or toenails, or finger or toenails turning black.

The ongoing impact of treatment can have a huge effect on everyday life. Of the women surveyed who suffered side effects 11% said they were unable to leave the house, and 32% were unable to do daily tasks like cooking and cleaning.

Breast Cancer Care’s Chief Executive, Samia al Qadhi, said: ‘We know that many surgeons, breast care nurses and oncologists all do a fantastic job, yet our survey shows that not all women feel the side effects of treatment were clearly explained beforehand. We want to ensure that every single woman has access to the information they need to help them cope with these often debilitating side effects.’

What’s big, pink and for a good cause?

The Big Pink, of course! Breast Cancer Care’s national fundraising event – where ‘any pink goes’ – is taking place on 16 October.

From a simple dress down day to a ladies’ lunch, cheeky brunch or cosy girls’ night in, a Big Pink can be as fuss-free as you like. Just gather your loved ones and do something wonderful this Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Every penny makes a difference and will help us continue to be there from day one for anyone who needs us.

Visit www.breastcancer.org.uk/thebigpink or call 0300 100 4442 for your free Starter Kit.
Flatter Fashion

Sarah Coombes founded Flatter Fashion www.flatterfashion.co.uk to give fashion and clothing tips for women who’ve had a mastectomy without reconstruction.

1. Shape
To add movement and volume look for A-line tops and swing dresses which flare gently from the chest, bubble hem tops, or dresses with elasticated waistbands. Off-the-shoulder, halter-necks and boat-necks can all add width across the chest.

2. Fabric
Floaty fabrics such as crepe, chiffon and light cotton create movement. Jersey drapes and gathers to create shape. Lace and embroidered layers add interest, and textured knits add depth. Try layering contrasting textures and colours.

3. Detailing
Extra features which suit a flat chest include double breast pockets (or single on your flat side), gathered or cowl necklines, and frills and pussy bows. Also try pleats and pin tucks, and contrasting sleeves.

4. Asymmetrical designs
If you’ve had a single mastectomy, also look out for pleats, draping or frills from one shoulder. Contrasting panels or bold patterns can also decorate your flat side.

5. Decoration
Be proud of your chest: decorate it! Look for patterns to draw the eye around your outfit, contrasting patterns on the bib or yoke, and appliquéd designs such as sequins, gems and beading.
‘Try something new’

Kelly Short appeared on Channel 4’s How to Look Good Naked after her breast cancer treatment.

1. **If you like it, try it.** Don’t feel you can only wear things that come up to the chin and disguise your body shape. Some things will work, some won’t, but you won’t know unless you try. Why not try something you wouldn’t have tried before your surgery?

2. **Online shopping** is a great way of finding particular styles without trekking halfway around the country. For example, many websites make it easy to search for dresses with sleeves. Even if you prefer to buy in store, websites can be a great source of inspiration for a new look.

3. Looking for something sexy **without a plunging neckline**? Try something that falls off one shoulder. And don’t worry about those bra straps showing!

4. **Gathered bust lines** can provide volume around the bust area, giving the illusion of a fuller bust. Also useful if you’ve had a single mastectomy without reconstruction and decide not to wear a prosthesis.

5. Large pieces of **costume jewellery** will attract the eye and move focus away from areas you’re self-conscious of. Big necklaces that are worn quite short around the neckline are great for moving the eye up away from the bust area.

### Asda launches post-surgery range

George at Asda is launching its great range of post-surgery lingerie, matching sets, swimwear and a headscarf for a second year. Developed with Breast Cancer Care, the new range is available online from mid-September from George.com and products start from just £6.

- Red lace bra £8
- Black and white floral bra £8
- Black and white polka dot tankini top £10
- Black and white polka dot tankini top £10
- White sports bra £8
Getting through breast cancer brought us closer together

Mother and daughter Linda Marsden and Serena Benassi were diagnosed with breast cancer within two years of each other.

Linda was 38 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1998. ‘The diagnosis came as a complete shock,’ she says. ‘I thought it was a death sentence because I didn’t know anything about breast cancer.’

The effects of treatment were difficult to deal with. ‘I went into an early menopause because of chemotherapy and I struggled with that. The symptoms – sweats, tiredness and weight gain – were awful.’

Linda had genetic testing and discovered she has an altered BRCA2 gene, which increases the risk of breast cancer and ovarian cancer. ‘I was devastated,’ she says. To reduce her risk of cancer in the future, Linda had her ovaries removed, and later had a double mastectomy and breast reconstruction.

An isolating experience

Two years after seeing her mum go through treatment, Serena – aged 23 at the time – was diagnosed herself. ‘I was very isolated,’ says Serena, who found herself in a hospital ward with women who were much older than her. ‘I had a bilateral mastectomy and immediate reconstruction very soon after my diagnosis, so it was like a whirlwind. I didn’t tell my friends, I just went into hibernation.’

For Linda, seeing her daughter diagnosed, and finding out she also has the BRCA2 altered gene, was devastating. ‘I didn’t cope well at all,’ she says. ‘It really threw me. But she’s a very strong girl.’

A closer bond

Both Linda and Serena say they’ve become closer as a result of their shared experience.

‘We bonded so much during my treatment,’ says Serena. Linda agrees: ‘We became closer throughout the course of our treatment for cancer. We talk more and understand each other better.’

It’s only recently that the two women began to understand exactly what they went through. ‘My mum and I just got on with things,’ says Serena. ‘It’s only now that we’ve acknowledged it affected us more than we realised.’

Everything changes

Linda and Serena say they’ve struggled to cope with the changes to their body as a result of treatment. But other changes have been positive.

‘It took my diagnosis to make me assess my life,’ says Serena. ‘I decided to pursue my dream career as a firefighter, which I achieved almost a year after my operation.’

She also gives support to other younger women through Someone Like Me, Breast Cancer Care’s one-to-one telephone and email support service.

Linda says she now worries less about the little things in life. ‘I try to do things that make me happy. I feel guilty for saying this, but life has changed for the better.’

Visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0345 077 1893 for information about Someone Like Me.
Kate Douglas was diagnosed with primary breast cancer at the age of 32, just two weeks after having her daughter, Lola. Two years later she was told her cancer had come back and had spread.

‘Being diagnosed with breast cancer was like I had been run over by a train,’ says Kate. ‘I got through it with the support of my lovely family and friends. People say I’m amazing and strong, but I put it down to the support.’

Just as Kate had started to get her life back together after her primary diagnosis, she began to get pain in her back. ‘I was well up on symptoms for advanced breast cancer and at the back of my mind I did think it could be signs of the disease, but I tried to be positive.’

Kate was diagnosed with secondary breast cancer in the bones and was later told she also has lesions in her liver.

‘I have tried to stop cancer getting in the way of my life and my career but it has definitely affected it. I find now that it is extremely hard to plan ahead as I don’t know what is around the corner for me.

‘I have a fantastic partner called Les who has been supportive to me throughout. I definitely think we would have had more children and would even have adopted after my primary diagnosis but the advanced illness has taken this choice away. I have tried not to let this upset me because I am very lucky I have Lola and two fantastic stepchildren.’

Kate is taking part in a clinical trial which involves having weekly chemotherapy and another drug. ‘The regime is three weeks on and one week off and I am tolerating it really well. I will continue on this regime until it stops working or bad side effects kick in.

‘I have had the cold cap which has been successful so I still have my hair, which has been a massive boost to me. People can’t believe I have the illness that I have because I look really well.’

Meeting new people is something that Kate finds difficult: ‘I feel like I come with a “dark secret” now and sometimes I get scared of people’s reactions to it, which is ridiculous. But I have met some good friends lately who all know about my cancer, some of them from the Breast Cancer Care Forum.’

While having secondary breast cancer has affected what Kate can do, she’s determined to make the most of the things she can do. ‘I often decide to do things just because I can, despite maybe being in pain for a few days after. I recently got back in the saddle after two years since last riding a horse and galloped miles on a beach with my friend. It was exhilarating and a day I will never forget.’
When I was diagnosed with breast cancer in August 2013, at first my doctors said they hoped I wouldn’t need to have chemotherapy. But when I had a mastectomy, they found the cancer had spread to my lymph nodes so I would have to have it. I’d been strong during my diagnosis, but the moment I knew I had to have chemotherapy, that was when I cried.

I didn’t want anyone to know I had cancer, and having chemotherapy would change that. I didn’t have a clue about how chemotherapy would affect my fertility. All I was worried about was the hair loss.

One of my aunts told me about someone she knew whose fertility had been affected by chemotherapy. I did some research online and read up about it. At an appointment with my oncologist he went through the treatment plan and brought up the issue of fertility. I asked about having IVF [in vitro fertilisation] to freeze some embryos.

I was seeing my consultant privately through my work insurance but I needed an NHS doctor to refer me for IVF. I went to my GP surgery to ask them to sign a letter so that I could have the treatment, but there was a delay in them getting back to me. I chased it up, because time was of the essence, and they told me they couldn’t approve my IVF because their policy was that I had to have been trying to get pregnant for more than three years. It made no sense to me that they weren’t willing to consider my situation.

I went on the online forums and people suggested looking at the NICE guidance on fertility for people with cancer. I contacted my local CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) to appeal my GP’s decision and went to see my MP and explained to him what was happening.

But my IVF couldn’t wait as I needed to start chemotherapy, so my husband and I applied for a credit card so that we could get the process started and hoped that we’d be able to get the cost refunded later on. We paid for the drugs I had to take, and when the egg collection day was approaching we had the credit card ready to cover the cost of treatment.

I was sitting in the waiting room waiting for the procedure when I got an email from the CCG to say they would fund my IVF. From then on it was all a bit of a blur. You don’t really get the chance to take it all in.

We had 11 eggs collected. Ten were fertilised and one of these was damaged, so we have frozen nine embryos.

It was a real struggle to get our treatment funded, and I hope nobody else has to go through this at the same time as dealing with the stress of a breast cancer diagnosis.

Our booklet Fertility and breast cancer treatment has lots of information about this topic. Breast Cancer Care is campaigning to ensure all younger women with breast cancer are offered fertility funding from their local CCG. To find out more and get involved visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk/get-involved
Support from day one made a huge difference

Two years after she was diagnosed with breast cancer, Nicky Sherwood is now the face of Breast Cancer Care’s ‘Here from day one’ campaign.

Nicky clearly remembers the day she noticed a lump in her breast. She was lying in bed when her fingers brushed against the pea sized lump. Her GP reassured her that it was probably a cyst, but she referred Nicky for tests anyway.

A mammogram and ultrasound scan told a different story: it was more likely a sign of breast cancer. ‘I was told I’d have to come back in a week for the results of a biopsy,’ says Nicky. ‘I went out in a daze.’

While waiting for her test results, Nicky called Breast Cancer Care. ‘I wanted reassurance that what had happened to me was normal, and that I hadn’t imagined it all.’ Nicky found speaking to someone about it all incredibly reassuring. She felt more equipped to deal with the results.

Help from day one
The theme for Breast Cancer Care’s ‘Here from day one’ campaign is days and time. Breast cancer changes everything, even the things in your diary. Time becomes measured in appointments: the next scan, the next results, the next challenge.

‘Breast cancer becomes an interloper, a stranger, occupying a space at home,’ says Sarah Ross, Assistant Director of Communications and Marketing. ‘We know that the support we provide makes a very real difference. Yet, too often we hear people say they wish they’d known about us sooner.

‘Our new “Here from day one” campaign addresses this issue, and is raising awareness that Breast Cancer Care can offer care, support and information every day, from day one. ‘From the day you notice something’s not right to the day you begin to move forward, Breast Cancer Care is here to help you through.’

Support every day
‘Having access to Breast Cancer Care’s services from day one made a huge difference,’ says Nicky, who appears in the new campaign adverts, one of which is on the back cover of this issue of Vita.

As well as calling several times, Nicky used the online Forum, booklets and website, Someone Like Me telephone support service, and also went to a Younger Women Together event. ‘I felt quite in control during treatment,’ says Nicky, ‘and a large part of that was down to the help I received from this amazing charity.

‘I’ve benefited hugely from Breast Cancer Care’s support, and I can’t imagine going through treatment without it. I would have missed out on a huge amount of information, friendship, and the chance to meet people in the same boat as me.’

To watch Nicky’s video and find out more about Breast Cancer Care’s ‘Here from day one’ campaign, go to breastcancercare.org.uk/dayone
Worried about breast cancer coming back?

Worries about cancer returning are normal, but knowing how to be breast and body aware after treatment, and the symptoms you should report, could help manage your feelings of uncertainty.

Nearly everyone who has been treated for cancer has worries about it coming back (recurrence). The treatment you have had is given to try to prevent this happening. But while most people have no further problems, sometimes breast cancer can return. This can be a local recurrence, regional recurrence (also called locally advanced) or secondary breast cancer.

Local recurrence
This is when the breast cancer has come back in the chest/breast area, in the skin near the original site or in the scar, but has not spread to other parts of the body.
You can also develop a new primary breast cancer in the same breast or other breast – this is not local recurrence.

Regional recurrence (also called locally advanced)
This is when the breast cancer has come back and has spread beyond the breast and lymph nodes under the arm into the tissues and lymph nodes around the chest, neck and under the breastbone.

Secondary breast cancer
This is when breast cancer cells spread beyond the breast to other parts of the body. You may also hear this called metastatic or advanced breast cancer. The most common sites of spread are the bones, lung, liver and brain.

Staying breast and body aware after treatment
At the end of your treatment, your specialist team will continue to check how you’re recovering, both physically and emotionally (known as follow-up). This contact may be more frequent at first, becoming less so as time goes on. The way people are followed up after treatment varies but you should be told who to contact if you have any worries. You can read more about follow-up in our booklet Your follow-up after breast cancer: what’s next?
Whatever treatment you’ve had, and whatever follow-up you’re offered, it’s important to stay breast and body aware.

Being breast aware
It can be difficult to know how your breast or scar area should feel after treatment. The area around the scar may feel lumpy, numb or sensitive. You’ll need to get to know how it looks and feels so you know what’s normal for you. This will help you feel more confident about noticing changes. It’s also important to be aware of any new changes in the other breast.

Changes to look and feel for in the breast and chest area include:
- change in shape or size
- lump or thickening that feels different
- change in skin texture such as puckering or dimpling
- swelling in the upper arm
- swelling in your armpit or around your collarbone
- pain
- nipple discharge
- redness or a rash on the skin and/or around the nipple
- your nipple becomes inverted (pulled in) or changes its position or shape.

‘Worries about breast cancer returning are normal’
**Being body aware**

Any symptoms that are new and persistent, and have no obvious cause, should be reported. In most cases these are likely to be due to other health problems or your past medical history. But sometimes they can be a sign that the breast cancer has spread (secondary breast cancer).

Symptoms to report include:
- dull pain in the bones (such as your back, hips or ribs) that doesn’t improve with pain relief
- constantly feeling sick
- a dry cough or feeling out of breath
- severe headaches
- unexplained weight loss
- discomfort or swelling under the ribs or across the upper abdomen.

You should be told who to contact if you’re worried about any of the above symptoms. This will vary according to where you were treated – it may be your breast care nurse, the outpatient department or your GP.

**Coping with worries about recurrence**

Worries about your cancer coming back are normal, and the fear and anxiety usually lessens with time. At first, every ache or pain can frighten you. But as time passes, you may come to accept minor symptoms for what they are in most cases – warning signs of a cold or flu or the result of over-exerting yourself.

We all cope with anxieties in our own way and there are no easy answers. But keeping quiet about them and not wanting to bother anyone is probably not the best approach.

You can ask your hospital team or GP to be referred for counselling, or you may find a local support group helpful.

**Talk to others on our Forum**

Visit Breast Cancer Care’s online forum (forum.breastcancercare.org.uk) to share your worries with other people in a similar situation.

For a copy of *Your follow-up after breast cancer: what’s next?* visit [www.breastcancercare.org.uk/publications](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk/publications)
Don’t suffer alone with hormone treatment side effects

If you’re struggling to cope with side effects of hormone therapy, speaking to your healthcare professional could help you find a way to manage.
Hormone therapies – such as tamoxifen and anastrozole (brand name Arimidex) – have been part of breast cancer treatment for many years. They’re usually prescribed for at least five years – in women whose breast cancer is oestrogen receptor positive – to reduce the chance of breast cancer coming back.

But these drugs can cause a range of side effects. And coping with effects such as joint pain and hot flushes can be a real struggle. For some women, the desire to stop taking hormone therapy treatment altogether can be strong. A recent study into women who were prescribed hormone therapy suggested over half of them stopped taking it during the five-year period it was recommended for.

While stopping treatment early might resolve certain side effects, it could have an adverse effect on your outlook.

Don’t suffer in silence
Dealing with side effects might be particularly difficult in the first year or so of treatment, when you’re trying to get used to changes that have happened to your body because of breast cancer. But for some people the side effects can continue beyond this.

It’s clear that many women who decide to stop taking their hormone therapy do so without the support of their hospital team or a healthcare professional. But being able to speak to a healthcare professional about any side effects you have, and their effect on your daily life, is really important.

They can suggest ways to help you deal with side effects or improve them. This might include stopping the drug for a short time or trying a different hormone therapy to see if your symptoms improve. Or they might suggest ways to help you cope better with the side effects. So don’t suffer alone. Talking through issues with your healthcare professional can help you continue taking the hormone therapy you’ve been prescribed.

What are hormone therapies?
- The hormone oestrogen can play a part in stimulating some breast cancers to grow. These are called oestrogen receptor positive (or ER+) breast cancers.
- A number of different hormone therapies can be used to block the effect of oestrogen on cancer cells.
- Hormone therapies include tamoxifen, goserelin (Zoladex), fulvestrant (Faslodex) and aromatase inhibitors (anastrozole, letrozole and exemestane).
- Hormone therapies are usually taken for five years or more.
- Hormone therapies can be used to treat primary and secondary breast cancer.

Menopausal symptoms
Menopausal symptoms are a common side effect of hormone therapies. They can include hot flushes, night sweats and disturbed sleep, vaginal dryness or itching, loss of sex drive and mood changes.

Some women feel they have to put up with effects like hot flushes, and don’t want to bother anybody about them. But they can be very distressing. It’s worth talking to your specialist team or GP as there may be treatments that can help.

Keeping a diary of when you experience hot flushes might help you identify patterns, or if anything triggers your hot flushes that you might be able to avoid.

Five tips for dealing with hot flushes
- Keep a battery operated hand-held fan with you at all times.
- Wear layers so that you can remove clothing when a flush starts.
- Try a silk pillowcase, a cool pillow known as a ‘chillow’ or a cooling scarf to keep you cool.
- Always keep a bottle of water with you and avoid caffeine, alcohol and spicy foods.
- Take regular exercise.

Coping with pain
Aching or pain in your joints can be a common side effect of a group of hormone therapies called aromatase inhibitors (AIs). The pain is often mild, temporary and relieved with pain relief like paracetamol; but sometimes it can be severe and debilitating.

Depending on how bad the pain is, your doctor may advise you to have a short break from treatment for a few weeks to see if the pain improves. Some people benefit from switching to a different hormone therapy drug, such as a different AI or the drug tamoxifen, which has fewer joint-related side effects.

A physiotherapist may also be able to recommend exercises to help reduce joint pain.

For a copy of Breast Cancer Care’s Menopausal symptoms booklet or individual hormone drugs booklets, visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk/publications or call the Helpline on 0808 800 6000.
I've finished my treatment and am back at work. I want to get fit but I feel tired and don’t know where to start.

After treatment for breast cancer it’s not uncommon to feel tired. Being physically active and maintaining a healthy weight after cancer treatment can help to lessen some of the side effects from your treatment, such as feeling tired. Physical activity can also reduce the risk of both lymphoedema and osteoporosis, and can help reduce anxiety and depression and improve your mood. Plus there’s evidence that it may reduce the risk of breast cancer coming back.

Check with your treatment team or GP before starting any new activity. It’s best to start slowly and gently, then gradually increase the amount you do. If you’ve had breast reconstruction surgery, you may want to check which exercises are suitable.

It’s recommended that adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity a week. This can be 30 minutes of activity a day, five days a week, or you may prefer to do 10 minutes at a time, three times a day.

Sitting down less and moving around more will improve your fitness levels. If you drive to the shops or work, try parking a little further away and walking. If travelling by bus, get off a stop earlier. Take the stairs instead of the lift. Any amount of activity is better than none, so try to minimise the time you spend sitting down or being inactive.

Walking is a good activity to start with. Breast Cancer Care runs a Best Foot Forward programme in some parts of the country. It’s great for managing fatigue, can help to maintain a healthy weight and gives you companionship while you walk. You may also find watching Breast Cancer Care’s Eat well, keep active after breast cancer DVD useful.

Brisk walking, cycling, hiking and hill walking, water aerobics, gardening or dancing are all examples of moderate-intensity exercise.

Muscle-strengthening exercises are also important. You can try sitting to standing, squats, press-ups against the wall, lifting light weights (such as tins of food or small bottles of water) yoga or Pilates. If anything is new for you, introduce it slowly and build up gradually.

My wife was recently diagnosed with breast cancer and is getting lots of support from her family, friends and treatment team. I don’t want to worry her but I’m finding her diagnosis really difficult to cope with. Who can I talk to?

Being the partner of someone with breast cancer can be very difficult. The feelings you may go through – including shock, anger, acceptance, fear, relief and anxiety – can have a huge impact, physically and emotionally. You may think that letting your feelings show is a sign of weakness or being out of control. However, emotions are natural and normal. Crying can help let out inner feelings and tension. Some people find this easier than others. If you feel awkward crying in front of other people, it might help to find a place where you know you won’t be disturbed. There’s no reason to be ashamed of crying or sharing tears with your partner. If you don’t find an outlet for your emotions early on, they can develop into pent-up frustration, which can make you feel irritable and angry, especially if you’re taking on extra responsibilities at home.

Our Someone Like Me service can put you in touch with one of our partner volunteers, who can talk to you about your feelings and the issues raised by a partner’s diagnosis. Breast Cancer Care’s experts answer your questions about breast cancer and its treatment.
Your questions answered


If you have a question about breast cancer, call Breast Cancer Care free on 0808 800 6000. You can also Ask the Nurse by email: go to www.breastcancercare.org.uk/atn. To order or download Breast Cancer Care's publications, call the number above or visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk/publications.

Cancer Care’s online Forum (forum.breastcancercare.org.uk) has a section for friends and family of people diagnosed with breast cancer (called ‘Supporting someone with breast cancer’). Although it may be difficult to talk about how you’re feeling with your partner, it can help. Our In it together booklet has tips on communicating with each other. Some people find their GP or partner’s breast care nurse can be a good source of support.

Having negative thoughts that interfere with your daily life, feeling like you’ve lost enjoyment and interest in everyday things and experiences, loss of interest in your appearance and withdrawing from others (not going out or socialising) can be signs that you might be depressed. Your GP may have suggestions to help, including counselling or antidepressants. The hospital team treating your wife may have access to a clinical psychologist or counselling service that can offer treatment for anxiety and depression.

I’m 16 weeks pregnant and have been diagnosed with breast cancer. I have been recommended chemotherapy. Is this OK to have during pregnancy?

Pregnancy is measured in ‘trimesters’, each of which represents a number of weeks: first trimester from conception to 12 weeks; second trimester 13–28 weeks; third trimester 29 weeks to delivery. Chemotherapy is not usually given during the first trimester as it may harm an unborn baby. Having chemotherapy during the second and third trimesters is considered safe for both you and your baby. The anti-sickness and steroid treatments that are sometimes needed to manage the side effects of chemotherapy are also safe for pregnant women.

Women treated with chemotherapy during pregnancy usually go on to have healthy babies. Sometimes it may be necessary to have an earlier than planned delivery. Breast Cancer Care has a booklet called Breast cancer during pregnancy which you may find helpful.

You might also like to read Pregnancy and breast cancer, a leaflet produced by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. You can find this on the website www.rcog.org.uk. This has information about treatment and care when breast cancer is diagnosed during pregnancy.

Sometimes it can help to be in contact with others who understand what you’re going through. You may be interested in attending a Younger Women Together event run by Breast Cancer Care. These are two-day residential courses held in various locations across the UK, bringing together younger women with breast cancer. These free events provide support and information specifically for younger women. Or our Someone Like Me service can put you in touch by phone with someone who’s been through a similar situation. To find out more about both of these, call us on 0808 800 6000.

Breast Cancer Care has an online Forum (forum.breastcancercare.org.uk) where people can post messages of support and share information. There’s also a private Facebook group for younger women with breast cancer, some of whom have been diagnosed during pregnancy. You can find this link by typing ‘Younger Breast Cancer Network’ in the search box in the Forum section of our website.
Hot topic

When hospital treatment has finished, some people close to you may expect things to start getting ‘back to normal’ straight away. You may expect the same thing. But for many people, it’s not that easy.

When Vita reader Jazz Cooper’s treatment finished, some people assumed she was better. ‘Some people even said: “So you’re cured now”,’ says Jazz. ‘One person said: “Now you can put this behind you and move on.”’

Friends may have little experience of life-threatening illness and the ongoing impact it can have on you. And this means they may not respond to your needs as you’d like them to. Some people may behave in a way that leaves you feeling unsupported.

However, this doesn’t necessarily mean that they don’t care. They may simply be trying to help you move on and are unsure how or when to bring up the topic of your breast cancer.

‘I would feel angry that people could expect someone to go through so much and then be “better” in such a short space of time,’ says Jazz. ‘But without having experienced cancer and the treatment for it, how would they know?’

Talking

Talking openly about your cancer may make it easier for the people around you to respond to your needs. ‘I think it’s important to tell people if you are tired or not feeling great,’ says Jazz, ‘and to ask for support when you need it.’

Androulla Pieri, who was diagnosed with breast cancer seven years ago, agrees. ‘I would strongly suggest saying how you feel,’ she says. ‘I made it clear that I needed a slower pace, quieter environment and that the adjustments were an ongoing process. The shock of the cancer diagnosis and treatment had changed me and affected my close loved ones, so I felt it was important to help them understand.’

Back to work

If you’ve had to take time off work during breast cancer treatment, returning to your normal work pattern can be difficult because of the physical and emotional effects you’re facing.

‘I could only take on one task at a time and was honest with my colleagues,’ says Jazz. ‘I made them write down instructions for work that I wasn’t starting immediately so that I knew what needed to be done when I did get to the job.’

Employers are required to make reasonable adjustments to help you return to work. You might prefer not to discuss your cancer with your employer, and you don’t have to. But if you don’t tell them about your treatment, it’s difficult for them to know what adjustments they need to make.

‘When I went back to work it was a huge learning curve,’ says Androulla: ‘lots of adjustments and a lot of lowering my expectations, which took time to accept and to do. But I was left to work at the pace that suited me. My boss was wonderful!’

Has everyone forgotten I’ve been ill?

Two Vita readers share their thoughts on how other people might react when treatment has come to an end.

For a copy of Moving Forward, our resource pack for people living with and beyond breast cancer, visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk/publications or call 0808 800 6000.
Della Walker, who has secondary breast cancer, describes a typical day.

5am
Am slapped awake by Cyril, my three-legged, permanently hungry cat. Stagger downstairs, feed cat, and return to bed with first cup of tea of the day. Drift back to sleep, rousing only to grunt at my husband as he leaves for work.

8.30am
Wake up to face the excitement of finding which, if any, chemotherapy side effects are going to feature today. In the hope of a reasonable day (no flopping about with fatigue or explosive visits to the bathroom), I head downstairs for breakfast and the three pills which are my morning dose of chemo: capecitabine.

9am
Check in online with my fellow metastatic breast cancer pals to see how people are getting on and who’s getting scans, results or treatment today. Cross fingers there’s no bad news.

10.30am
Stroll to the supermarket. The treatment I’m on at the moment doesn’t cause baldness, so I have hair. I’ve found an amazing difference between going to the supermarket bald (or with a headscarf) and with hair. When I had no hair, strangers fell over themselves to let me in front of them in the queue and help me get items I struggled to reach. These days, as I don’t look ill, the normal argy-bargy and trolley-rage ensue.

12.30pm
Off to the pub with my sister for lunch. I go to order food, then find in the 10 seconds it’s taken me to walk to the bar I’ve forgotten what my sister ordered. I go back to ask her again, pleading ‘chemo brain’ as an excuse.

2.30pm
Home but shattered from the morning’s activity. Even on a day when side effects of chemo are mercifully absent, I still need to rest – cat permitting.

4.30pm
Wake up in time to get cross with overly fussy house hunters on Escape to the Country, and shout the wrong answers at the TV during Pointless.

6pm
As I’ve had a day of feeling really quite well, I make dinner (involving vegetables as opposed to oven chips) and take my second lot of chemo tablets.

7.30pm
It’s time to take my lapatinib. I shouldn’t moan about taking this drug, especially as I was prescribed it just before it was removed from the Cancer Drugs Fund. But the tablets are huge. I know I could easily swallow a piece of chocolate that size but I struggle with these pills, and I have to take five every evening.

8pm
Slump on sofa with husband and possibly cat. We do the usual things – argue about what to watch on TV, eat unhealthy snacks and doze off.

10pm
Head for bed and cross fingers that tomorrow I’ll feel as well as today. So there you have it. Not the most scintillating day, but one where I felt well and could do normal things. And although I can’t say cancer didn’t come to mind from time to time, I didn’t spend all my time fretting (unless you include worrying about the cat).

To read Della’s blogposts about living with secondary breast cancer for Vita online, visit www.vita.org.uk/blog
Fitness matters

App review: Pacer
Available on iPhone and Android (free to install)

What is the app for?
If you’re keen to record and boost the amount of activity you do in a day, Pacer is a really useful app to have. Once you’ve downloaded the app you can customise it to your needs and goals and it will start recording your daily activity, whether it’s walking, running, cycling or a combination. The app works towards a goal of 10,000 steps a day and records how many calories are burned and how many kilometers are covered in a day.

Who is the app for?
This app would be useful for anyone who wants to increase and record their daily activity, whatever their level or goals.

What I like about the app
There are so many things I like about this app. It encourages me to want to try to reach 10,000 steps a day and gives me gentle reminders as the day goes on. You can set personal goals and connect with friends on Facebook to share goals if you want the support of others. But the best thing is that I have my phone with me most of the time so just about every step I take is recorded.

Reviewed by Rachel Rawson, Senior Clinical Nurse Specialist

A Ribbonwalk to recovery
For Jackie Scully, Breast Cancer Care’s first overnight Pink Ribbonwalk was a chance to give something back and to give her legs – and her mum – a workout.

When I think back over the last year and my breast cancer diagnosis, I think more about the unexpected positives than the things that didn’t quite go according to plan. Spending more time with my mum was one of them.

So how do I thank a woman who travelled up to London on the bus every three weeks to laugh with me on the chemo ward and hold me when the tears started to fall? I sign her up to do the London at Night 20-mile pink Ribbonwalk, that’s how!

When I think back over the last year and my breast cancer diagnosis, I think more about the unexpected positives than the things that didn’t quite go according to plan. Spending more time with my mum was one of them.

London at night is a special place. This city has been my home these past 12 years, but doing this walk made me see it with fresh eyes. London with empty streets is a rare treat. Add hundreds of pink T-shirts, the capital’s landmarks and a loop of the Royal Albert Hall, and you start to see how wonderful this city is. Who needs the Tube when you have a pair of walking trainers and enough energy to stay up all night?

I confess, I thought we’d spend the night taking photos, enjoying the rest stops and being tourists. Little did I think we’d cross the line joint fourth – welcomed home by the sight of hundreds of pink ribbons and heartfelt messages. I’m not sure my mum expected us to finish in 4 hours 45 minutes, but she appreciated getting to bed before 5am (although maybe not the walk up to the top of St Paul’s Cathedral the next day).

Thank you amazing mum and thank you Breast Cancer Care. I can’t wait to do it all over again next year – just maybe a bit slower!
Thai-style broth
Serves 4
• 2 x 300ml cartons chilled chicken stock
• 2 chicken breast fillets, thinly sliced
• 1 lemongrass stalk, thinly sliced
• 5cm piece ginger, peeled and sliced
• 120g shiitake mushrooms, halved
• 100g button mushrooms, sliced
• 4 spring onions, trimmed and shredded
• 1 large red chilli, deseeded and sliced
• 25g pack fresh coriander, very roughly chopped
• 2 tbsp tom yum soup paste or Thai red curry paste
• 1 tbsp fish sauce (nam pla)
• juice 1 lime
• wedges of lime to serve

1. Bring the stock to the boil with 300ml water. Add the chicken, lemongrass and ginger, then simmer for 10 minutes. Use a large slotted spoon to remove any scum floating on the surface of the broth.
2. Add the remaining ingredients, bring back to the boil and simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Serve in bowls topped with a sprig of fresh coriander and garnish with lime wedges.

Mushroom, spinach, kale and sweet potato pie
Serves 4
• 250g spinach, wilted
• 100g kale, cooked
• 2 tablespoons olive oil
• 500g closed cup mushrooms, thickly sliced
• 2 cloves garlic, crushed
• 250ml vegetable stock
• 300g cooked sweet potatoes, cut into chunks
• 2 tablespoons light creme fraîche
• 150g feta cheese, cubed
• salt and freshly ground black pepper
• 3 sheets filo pastry

2. Heat half the oil in a large non-stick pan and fry the mushrooms on a high heat for about 5 minutes until golden.
3. Add the garlic and fry for a further minute, then tip in the stock and sweet potatoes. Bubble for a few minutes until reduced.
4. Season, then remove from the heat. Stir in the creme fraîche, spinach and kale.
5. Pour into a pie dish and top with the cubed feta. Allow to cool for a few minutes.
6. Brush each sheet of filo with the remaining oil, quarter the sheets then loosely scrunch up and lay on top of pie filling.
7. Bake in the pre-heated oven for 20–25 minutes until golden.
8. Serve with green vegetables such as steamed broccoli and green beans.
Our amazing corporate partners have turned their products pink to support Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Each product includes a donation to Breast Cancer Care so by purchasing one it’s a win win! You’re not only treating yourself but also supporting Breast Cancer Care. We’ve picked some of our favourites to share with you.

**Interflora**
Interflora florists have created this beautiful bouquet to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our partnership. The Breast Cancer Care 10th Anniversary Vase (£29.99, donation £2.99) is available from www.interflora.co.uk

**Elemis**
Elemis Pro-Radiance Illuminating Flash Balm (£33.00) limited-edition hybrid moisturiser and primer comes in a pink zipped pouch. Elemis is making a one-off donation of £10,000. Available at www.elemis.com and selected department stores, spas and salons.

**Smint**
Pick up a pack of the refreshing new Smint Strawberry Mix (£1.15) and 5p will be donated to Breast Cancer Care. Available from leading Boots, Superdrug, WHSmith Travel and selected supermarkets.

**FitFlop**
Ridiculously comfy, cool and classic, FitFlop’s must-have new fringe-fronted Mukkloafers (£99, donation £50) feel ultra-good underfoot. Available from www.fitflop.co.uk
Asda
Asda’s phenomenal Tickled Pink campaign is supporting Breast Cancer Care for the 19th year. To celebrate, there are a number of exciting new Tickled Pink products this year. Look out in Asda stores nationwide from mid-September and throughout October for these and many more Tickled Pink products.

- Alpro Almond Unsweetened (£1.69, donation 16p)
- Hovis Nimble bread (60p, donation 6p)

Streamline Foods
Finger-licking fruitiness is guaranteed in every jar of Streamline Less Sugar jams and marmalades (£1.45, donation 10p). Available in selected supermarkets nationwide.

- Tickled Pink travel mug (£7, donation 70p)
- Tickled Pink kettle (£25, donation £2.50)

QVC
Made especially for QVC, this Celebrity Charm Bracelet (£23.98, donation £8.20) features a Swarovski crystal, pink crystals and enamel, and charms designed by Sharon Osbourne, Lisa Snowdon, Julien Macdonald, Simon Wilson and Michelle Mone. Available from www.qvcuk.com

Mission Foods
Wrap up a tasty treat and show your support with Mission Deli Original Wraps (£1.70). These deliciously soft wraps are perfect for a host of recipes, and Mission Deli pledges a £50,000 donation to Breast Cancer Care. Available at supermarkets across the UK.
Breast cancer has affected me in every way,’ says Karen, who was diagnosed in October 2014. ‘However, I have come to realise that having a mastectomy doesn’t take away your femininity. True femininity and beauty come from the inside, not the outside. I want to help other women come to that same realisation.’

Karen turned to Breast Cancer Care for support during her treatment. ‘Their Ask the Nurse service helped put my mind at rest when confronted with difficult decisions, and I found their Forum to be truly inspirational.’

Karen has decided to use her love of swimming, cycling and running to take on this year of challenge events, from February 2015 to March 2016. ‘My friends have been my rock,’ says Karen, who works as a police dog handler. ‘I call them my Army of Angels. They have spurred me on and continue to do so. The continued support from my partner Jez and daughter Sarah has also been outstanding.’

Karen and her ‘Army’ have taken on many challenges already this year, including 5k runs, cycle rides, Breast Cancer Care’s WomenOnly Triathlon in July, and the Great North Run in September. They have already raised an amazing £10,000, money that will help Breast Cancer Care continue to be there for anyone affected by breast cancer. ‘I feel that out of something so awful, a lot of good has happened,’ says Karen: ‘lots of laughs have been had and relationships have been made stronger.’
Looking ahead to life after treatment?

**Moving Forward short courses**
Looking at issues you may face after treatment, our short courses provide support and information on adjusting to life after a cancer diagnosis. Run in partnership with the NHS, courses take place across the UK.

**Lingerie Evenings**
For more confidence choosing a bra after surgery, join other women and trained fitters at a Lingerie Evening.
- Kent, 1 October
- Glasgow, 8 October
- Aberdeen, 15 October
- Edinburgh, 21 October
- Cardiff, 23 October
- Lanarkshire, 29 October
- Solihull, 29 October

**Moving Forward Information Sessions**
Relaxed talks on Moving Forward topics, with a chance to ask questions and chat with others.
- Breast reconstruction
  - Llandudno, 1 October
  - Edinburgh, 7 October
  - Birmingham, 12 November
- Healthy eating
  - Bournemouth, 30 October
- Post-surgery bras and prostheses
  - Wythenshawe, 2 October
  - London, 15 October
  - Manchester, 2 December
  - Sheffield, 11 December
- Signs and symptoms of a possible recurrence
  - Solihull, 6 October
  - Kent, 13 October
  - Romford, 10 November
- Understanding drug treatments
  - Cardiff, 21 October

**Younger Women Together**
Two days of information, support and sharing. Come to a Younger Women Together event and meet around 30 other women under 45 who’ve been diagnosed with primary breast cancer. All food and accommodation provided free. Email youngerwomen@breastcancercare.org.uk to find out more.
- Bristol, 20/21 November

**Living with Secondary Breast Cancer**
Regular meet-ups for people living with secondary breast cancer. With expert guest speakers. Email secondaryservices@breastcancercare.org.uk to find out more.
- Birmingham • Bristol • Cardiff
- Derby • Edinburgh • Forth Valley
- Glasgow • Halifax/Huddersfield
- Lanarkshire • Leeds • Liverpool
- Llandudno • Manchester
- North London/Hertfordshire
- Oxford • Romford • Sheffield
- Sutton/South London
- York/Harrogate

**Best Foot Forward walking groups**
For people of all fitness levels, walks last around 30 minutes, follow an easy route and finish at a local café for a cup of tea and a chat.
- Barnsley • Cardiff • Halifax
- Huddersfield • Salford • Sheffield
- Stockport

Email movingforward@breastcancercare.org.uk to find out more about any of our Moving Forward services, or give us a call.

To find out more

Call our friendly Services team for more information about the support we offer on

0345 077 1893

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The Bra Clinic Support after Surgery. Mastectomy Wear specialist Susan Cooper provides an essential specialist service for women when recovering from breast cancer surgery and treatment. For online shopping, clinics, appointments and information, visit www.thebraclinic.co.uk or call Susan on 07918 656 628 (m).

Cool and Beautiful Nightwear Cool, ultra feminine, 100% cotton, mastectomy nightdresses. They are discreetly pocketed to hold a soft prosthesis with plenty of fabric in the skirt to allow for extra comfort. Designed as a result of personal experience and made in the UK. Would make a lovely Christmas present. Available to buy online from www.coolandbeautiful.com or telephone 01568 750011 for more information.

Nicola Jane With 30 years’ expertise in mastectomy fashion, our beautiful bras and stunning swimwear will help restore your confidence after surgery. All with fitted pockets to hold your prosthesis securely. Free returns and shops throughout the UK. Call 0845 265 7595 or visit www.nicolajane.com.

Nora Joan offers a comfort pillow specially shaped for women who have undergone mastectomy surgery. This crescent-shaped pillow is an envelope design with no zips or poppers, providing complete comfort for the scarred tissue. It is 100% cotton and comes in an array of colours. Contact info@norajoan.co.uk or visit www.norajoan.co.uk.

Rae Denman Medical Tattooist offers consultations and advice on restoring your nipple and areola after reconstruction. For many women this is the final part of the journey. It is a safe, painless and bespoke service in a relaxing atmosphere. For more information or to book an appointment, please call 07967 758714 or email through my website at www.raedenman.co.uk.

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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 www.suburbanturban.co.uk. Tel: 01306 640123

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

One BIG PINK day for women facing breast cancer

From a simple dress down day to a ladies’ lunch, cheeky brunch or cosy night in – anything goes, as long as it’s pink. Join us this October and raise money to help us be there from day one for anyone who needs us.

Sign up for your free Starter Kit today

www.breastcancercare.org.uk/thebigpink
0300 100 4442

Make a difference. Make it big. And make it pink!
The day you notice something’s not right
The day you are diagnosed
The day you can’t accept the news
The day you tell those close to you
The day you tell your children
The day you decide you’re not giving up
The day you start your treatment
The day you wonder ‘what now?’
The day you move forward

Care, support and information from day one.
Call our nurses free on **0808 800 6000** or visit **breastcancercare.org.uk**

To receive future issues of Vita call us on **0345 092 0808**, email **vita@breastcancercare.org.uk** or cut off this slip, fill in your details and return it in an envelope to our freepost address: Breast Cancer Care, RRKZ-ARZY-YCKG, 5-13 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0NS.

If you have already sent us this form, you will continue to receive Vita four times per year. Breast Cancer Care volunteers will be sent Vita automatically. We will not pass your details on to any third parties. If you are a member of a support group or a healthcare professional and would like multiple copies, please call **0345 092 0808**.