

# Follow-Up Medical Care After **BREAST CANCER TREATMENT**

## Why is medical care so important?

Some of the goals of these visits are to:

- Find local breast cancer recurrence.
- Find any breast cancer that has spread to other parts of the body (metastasis).
- Manage any problems you have taking medications (such as hormone therapy).
- Manage any side effects of treatment (such as menopausal symptoms).
- Check for changes in your [family history](#) and refer you to [genetic counseling](#), if appropriate.
- Look for signs of lymphedema.
- Discuss ways to help lower your risk of breast cancer recurrence.
- Provide emotional support.
- Give you a time to ask questions and share concerns.

## I'm done with treatment, now what?

It's normal to be scared and unsure of what to think after treatment for breast cancer ends. It may take time to heal physically and emotionally. Take it slow and ease back into your daily routine. Doing things you enjoy, even if it takes time, will help you feel better.

## What medical care do I need after treatment?

You should see your doctors regularly for the first few years after breast cancer treatment.

Regular exams and mammograms are an important part of follow-up care after treatment. Your doctor, oncologist or surgeon can help plan your follow-up care.

## Recommended medical care after breast cancer treatment

|  | Who   | Plan for care   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Medical history and physical exam</b>                                 | All survivors   | 1-4 times a year (depending on your situation) for 5 years, then every year               |
| <b>Mammogram</b><br>(for remaining breast tissue and/or opposite breast) | Women treated with lumpectomy plus radiation therapy  | 6-12 months after radiation therapy ends, then every year                                 |
|  | Women treated with mastectomy   | 1 year after mammogram that led to diagnosis, then every year                             |
| <b>Pelvic exam</b>   | All survivors   | Every year  |
| <b>Pap smear (Pap test)</b>  | Women ages 21-29 who have not had their uterus removed (have not had a hysterectomy)  | Every 3 years   |
|  | Women ages 30-65 who have not had their uterus removed (have not had a hysterectomy)  | If also getting an HPV test, every 5 years (preferred). If Pap smear alone, every 3 years |
|  | Women ages 66 and older who have not had their uterus removed (have not had a hysterectomy)   | Talk with your health care provider about whether to continue Pap smears                  |
| <b>Bone health exams</b>   | Women at higher risk of osteoporosis due to risk factors including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aromatase inhibitor use</li> <li>• Early menopause due to treatment</li> <li>• Age 65 years or older</li> <li>• Age 60-64 years with family history of osteoporosis or with low body weight</li> </ul> | Bone mineral density tests every 1-2 years, depending on a person's risk factors          |

\*Adapted from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN), the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), the American Cancer Society and the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists materials.

For more information, visit [komen.org](http://komen.org) or call Susan G. Komen's breast care helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 10 PM ET.



**1-877 GO KOMEN**  
**(1-877-465-6636)**  
or email  
[helpline@komen.org](mailto:helpline@komen.org)

## Resources

**Susan G. Komen®**  
1-877 GO KOMEN  
(1-877-465-6636)  
[komen.org](http://komen.org)

**American Cancer Society**  
1-800-ACS-2345  
[cancer.org](http://cancer.org)

**Living Beyond Breast Cancer**  
1-888-753-5222  
[lbbc.org](http://lbbc.org)

## Related educational resources:

- [Breast Cancer Recurrence](#)
- [Lymphedema](#)
- [Sexuality and Intimacy](#)
- [Support After A Breast Cancer Diagnosis](#)

## I'm anxious about recurrence. What symptoms should I report to my doctor?

You might be aware of every ache and pain in your body now. Each pain brings with it the fear cancer has returned. This is normal. It may ease with time.

Try not to panic if you have a change in your weight or have bone pain. These are common problems. Most often they don't mean the breast cancer has spread. For instance, some women have arthritis. This pain is not breast cancer. If you're concerned about any signs or symptoms you have that last for more than 2 weeks, call your doctor.

### Metastasis

Metastasis is most often found when people report symptoms such as:

- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Weight loss
- Bone pain
- Seizures
- Yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes (jaundice)

Based on your symptoms, tests may be done to see if the breast cancer has spread. Follow-up tests may include:

- Blood tests (such as tumor marker tests)
- Imaging tests (such as bone scans, CT scans, PET scans and chest X-rays)
- A tissue biopsy (to check if a suspicious finding is a recurrence of breast cancer)

If you need these tests, it can be scary. If you can, plan them so you can get the



results the same day (or the next). Some people like to schedule time with their doctor to go over the results (either in person or on the phone). Also, bring a family member or friend with you, if you can.

## Will it ever be over?

Believe it or not, there may come a day when you no longer think about cancer every day. It's normal to worry though. This should lessen over time.

## You're not alone

You may be able to get support from other breast cancer survivors who know what you're going through. There are many types of support groups. These groups can be a helpful source of information and support.

Our Breast Care Helpline 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) provides free, professional support services to anyone with breast cancer questions or concerns, including men diagnosed with breast cancer and their families. Calls are answered by a trained and caring staff member Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. ET. You can also email the helpline at [helpline@komen.org](mailto:helpline@komen.org).

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