

First thought — your children

You may have just learned you have breast cancer. One of your first thoughts may be about your children. What is going through your mind? Fear of the unknown? Should you tell them? What should you tell them? If they ask you if you are going to die, what will you say? What if you are not around to see them grow up? It's normal to have these thoughts.

When something threatens your life, your first instinct is to protect your family, especially your children. You don't want them to worry or be upset. You want to preserve their innocence. Talking to your family, partner, doctor, nurse or social worker can help you decide what to say. In the end, you know your children best. You are the best person to decide how and when to tell your children about your breast cancer.

Your child's perspective

Your children look up to you and depending on their age, may depend on you for everything. And now, that may change, at least for awhile. They can sense when something is wrong. Children may imagine things are worse than they are, so it is best to be as open and honest as possible. You decide how much to say. This may be hard, but it is important.

Encourage your children to talk to you and ask questions. Giving honest, real answers to their questions will help lessen their fears. Let your children know why certain things are happening. For example, explain why you are losing your hair, getting sick from treatment, losing a breast or will be gone for a few days. Explain anything that changes their daily routine.

It is a good idea to let your children's teachers know what you are going through — especially for younger children. The teachers may be able to help your children cope if they spend most of the day at school.

Finally, just as your children depend on you, you can depend on them too. They can be, and probably want to be, a source of support for you. They will want to listen to you, hug you, kiss you and spend time with you. Let them.



How does this affect your daughter?



If you have a daughter, you may be worried she will get breast cancer too. Having a mother with breast cancer increases a daughter's chance of getting breast cancer. However, just because you have it does not mean that your daughter will get it too.

Talk to your daughter about her concerns. Allow her to ask questions. If you cannot answer them, it is okay to say, "I don't know the answer right now, but I'll find out." Members of your health care team can also help you.

If your daughter is older, talk to her about getting to know the normal look and feel of her breasts. She may want to talk with her health care provider about what your diagnosis means for her. She can also discuss her options for lowering her risk of breast cancer.

Women under age 40 with either a family history of breast cancer or other concerns about their personal risk should talk with their health care provider about when to start getting mammograms or other tests, such as breast MRI, and how often to have them. Women at higher risk may need to get screened earlier and more often than is recommended for women at average risk.

Resources

Chances are a member of your health care team has told you about support groups you may join. You can also start by calling any of the following organizations:

Susan G. Komen®
1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)
www.komen.org

American Cancer Society's Reach to Recovery Program
1-800-ACS-2345
www.cancer.org

Cancer Support Community
1-888-793-9355
www.cancersupportcommunity.org

Kids Cope
www.kidscope.org

Kids Connected
1-800-899-2866
www.kidsconnected.org

Young Survival Coalition®
1-877-972-1011
www.youngsurvival.org

Booklet
[What's happening to mom?](#) by Susan G. Komen®
1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)

The Komen message boards offer online forums for breast cancer survivors to share their experiences and advice with other survivors. <https://apps.komen.org/Forums/>

Related fact sheets in this series:

- Genetics and Breast Cancer
- Support After A Breast Cancer Diagnosis

The above list of resources is only a suggested resource and is not a complete listing of breast cancer materials or information. The information contained herein is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional. Komen does not endorse, recommend or make any warranties or representations regarding the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, quality or non-infringement of any of the materials, products or information provided by the organizations referenced herein.