



Treatment for metastatic breast cancer (MBC) focuses on extending and maintaining **quality of life**, including:

- Emotional and physical health
- Ability to perform daily roles
- **Sexuality and intimacy**
- Pain, fatigue and other side effects of treatment or the cancer itself

## Symptom management

**Managing side effects** and other issues that impact your quality of life is a main part of your cancer care. You should never feel you have to endure pain or other side effects. Tell your doctor or nurse about any problems you are having. They can help you control pain and manage symptoms, such as nausea and fatigue. This is called palliative care.

### Palliative care

**Palliative care** is an extra layer of care given along with treatment for the cancer to improve quality of life. It works best when it's added early in metastatic cancer care.

Before any treatment begins, talk with your doctor about possible side effects from treatment and ways to deal with them.

Some common symptoms and side effects, and ways to manage them include:

**DIARRHEA** can be a side effect of some chemotherapy and other drug therapies. If you're having more than 4 loose bowel movements a day or the diarrhea doesn't improve after 2 days, call your doctor to see what can be done to prevent or treat diarrhea.

**Ways to manage diarrhea:**

- Eat small bland meals such as bananas, rice, toast, plain pasta.
- Drink 8-10 large glasses of clear liquids (broth and sports drinks with electrolytes are good choices).
- Avoid dairy, alcohol, caffeine and spicy foods.

**FATIGUE** can be caused by treatment, depression, trouble sleeping or anemia (a low red blood cell count). Talk with your doctor about ways to manage your fatigue. Getting some physical activity (if you are able) can help. Ask family and friends to help with day-to-day tasks.

**LOSS OF APPETITE** can be caused by treatment or the cancer itself. Although this can make it hard to eat, try to get enough calories. Food strengthens your body. Light exercise (if you're able) may help increase your appetite. Nausea is a common side effect of some treatments. Your doctor can prescribe medicine to help ease it. For tips to manage nausea, click [here](#).

**To prevent unwanted weight loss:**

- Eat small frequent meals and snacks.
- Eat your favorite foods.
- Add calories to meals with oils, sauces, avocado, nuts and nut butters.
- Sip on smoothies, milk shakes or protein drinks (such as Ensure and Boost).
- Drink plenty of water between meals instead of with meals to prevent fullness while eating.

For more tips, click [here](#).

# Metastatic Breast Cancer: **QUALITY OF LIFE**

## Resources

### Susan G. Komen®

1-877 GO KOMEN  
(1-877-465-6636)  
[komen.org](http://komen.org)

### Metastatic Breast Cancer Impact Series

Attend Susan G. Komen's MBC Impact Series, a free monthly educational event series for people living with metastatic breast cancer and their loved ones.

[komenmbc.vfairs.com](http://komenmbc.vfairs.com)

## Related online resources:

- [komen.org/MBCResources](http://komen.org/MBCResources)
- [komen.org/SurvivorshipResources](http://komen.org/SurvivorshipResources)
- [Breast Cancer Recurrence](#)
- [Metastatic Breast Cancer: What is It?](#)
- [Metastatic Breast Cancer: Treatment Overview](#)
- [Metastatic Breast Cancer: Questions to Ask the Doctor](#)
- [After Early Breast Cancer - Signs and Symptoms of Metastatic Breast Cancer](#)
- [Metastatic Breast Cancer: Bone Protection](#)
- [End-of-Life Care](#)
- [Complementary and Integrative Therapies](#)



**PAIN** is one of the biggest fears with cancer. Pain can almost always be managed.

Tell your doctor right away about any pain you have. Pain is easier to treat when you first have it. Waiting until the pain is severe can make it harder to control and may require more medicine.

Because pain can't be seen, it's hard to measure or describe. Keep a journal to help tell your doctor what you're feeling.

**BONE PAIN** can be a side effect for people with bone metastases. Serious bone complications such as **bone fractures (breaks)** and spinal cord compression can cause this pain. Your doctor may prescribe bone-strengthening drugs to lower these risks. Bone pain can also be treated with heat, pain medications, radiation therapy or chemotherapy.

For information about other side effects of metastatic breast cancer, click [here](#).

**DEPRESSION:** A breast cancer diagnosis can bring on a wide range of feelings such as shock, fear, sadness, anger and grief. These feelings are normal, but they can lead to emotional distress and depression. Talk with your doctor about how you're coping. Depression needs to be treated. Some people find a support group or talking to a counselor or therapist helpful.

## You are not alone

Many women and men have been where you are today. It may be helpful to talk with others. Your doctor can help you find a **support group**. Social support is a benefit of group therapy. The **Komen Breast Care Helpline** can also help you find resources in your area. Call 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) or email [helpline@komen.org](mailto:helpline@komen.org).

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