

Your follow-up care plan after treatment for breast cancer

A guide for women

This booklet will be reviewed as new evidence emerges. While every effort has been made to ensure that it is accurate, we do not accept responsibility for errors or omissions.



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About this booklet

This booklet gives you information on your follow-up care if you have had breast cancer.

Your follow-up care is based on best medical advice. It applies to you because:

1. You have completed your treatment for breast cancer.
2. You have received hospital check-ups for the recommended time.
3. No further breast cancer has been found since your diagnosis and treatment.
4. Your outlook is good.

What follow-up care do I need?

Your follow-up care will include you, your GP and the hospital, especially the x-ray department (radiology), and it may include the symptomatic breast clinic.

What will happen?

- You will have a mammogram once a year.
- You will visit your GP once a year for a check-up. This check-up will include a breast examination.
- If the mammogram and the check-up are normal, you will receive the same assessment in one year's time.
- If there are any concerns, either at your yearly check-up or in between, you will be referred to the symptomatic breast clinic and you will be seen quickly.

It is important that you receive follow-up care, but you no longer need to have routine check-ups at the hospital. When a follow-up plan is put in place your GP can care for you.

How is my follow-up care planned?

When your treatment is completed, the hospital will explain how your follow-up care will be planned. The hospital, you and your GP will all have responsibility for your follow-up.

1. The hospital is responsible for:

- Discharging you to the care of your GP.
- Giving information to you, and your GP, about your diagnosis, treatment and your follow-up care plan.
- Explaining the follow-up care plan to you and your GP.
- Giving you contact details for the symptomatic breast clinic.
- Giving you an urgent appointment if there are concerns about your breast health.

Also each year the hospital will be responsible for:

- Organising and doing your yearly mammogram.
- Informing you, and your GP, of normal mammogram results quickly.
- Informing you if the mammogram result is of any concern, and arranging for you to have more investigations and a specialist appointment if needed.

2. You are responsible for:

- Attending the hospital x-ray department for your yearly mammogram appointment. You should have a mammogram every twelve months. It is very important that you attend for your mammogram and that you continue to attend every twelve months for follow-up mammograms. You should contact the hospital if you do not receive your mammogram appointment at the expected time.
- Visiting your GP every year for a health check-up and a breast examination. You, and your GP, will have received the results of your mammogram before this check-up. It is your responsibility to make the appointment to attend your GP.
- Keeping a record of your appointments and results in your follow-up diary.
- Letting the hospital know if you change your GP and arranging for a summary of your medical notes to be sent to your new GP.
- Making an urgent GP appointment if you are concerned at any time.

3. Your GP is responsible for:

- Your yearly check-up and breast examination.
- Talking to you about the results of your mammogram.
- Making an urgent hospital appointment for you if there are any concerns.

Do I need other tests and scans?

No. The only test you need routinely is a mammogram every year. This is very important.

Other tests, such as scans or blood tests, are not routinely needed.

What new symptoms should concern me?

It is normal to be concerned about breast cancer returning. The first person to notice any change is usually you. If you are concerned you should see your GP. Do not wait until your next appointment.

You should look out for:

- Any changes to either of your breasts:
 - new lump(s) in your breast, neck or armpit,
 - spots, rash or lumps around your scar,
 - a rash, discharge or pulled appearance around your nipple, or
 - puckering or dimpling of your skin.
- Unexplained nausea, loss of appetite or weight loss.

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- New problems that do not respond to simple remedies, for example:
 - unexplained breathlessness or a persistent cough,
 - persistent headache (usually worse in the mornings) or blurred vision,
 - persistent bone or back pain and which is often worse at night,
 - discomfort or swelling under the ribs or across your upper chest, or
 - unexplained tiredness.

You should contact your GP if you notice any of these changes.

Other symptoms that do not improve within three weeks and have no obvious cause should be checked out by your GP.



Being breast aware

If you had breast-conserving surgery (a lumpectomy) or a mastectomy (with or without reconstruction), you should always be breast aware, even if you have yearly breast examinations and mammograms.

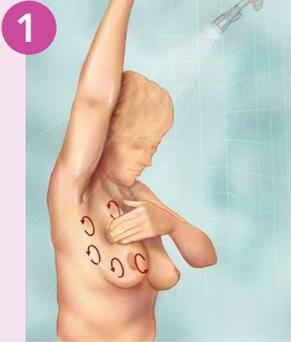
Following treatment for breast cancer it can be difficult to know how your breast or scar area should feel. After treatment the area around the scar may feel lumpy, numb or sensitive. You need to be familiar with how your breast looks and feels so you know what is normal for you. This will help you to be more confident in informing your GP of any changes.

It is also important to be aware of any new changes in your other breast or any arm swelling on the same side as your breast cancer.

You need to be breast aware for the rest of your life (see pictures).

If you have any concerns about your breast health, you should contact your GP. The hospital will see you urgently if you, or your GP, are concerned about your breast health.

Breast awareness



1 Be Breast Aware. Know how your breasts normally look and feel.



2 Look for changes in the appearance of your breast. Stand and look in the mirror with your shoulders straight and your arms on your hips.



3 Raise your arms and look for changes in appearance. Check nipples for any changes or discharge.

Courtesy of www.breastcancer.org

See your GP if you have any concerns.



How can I stay healthy?

- Don't smoke and avoid other people's smoke.
- Have a healthy diet. You should have at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Limit your alcohol intake. Having less alcohol is best for breast health. The recommended limit for all women is eleven standard drinks per week. If you have an increased risk of breast cancer it is better to reduce your alcohol intake even further.
- Take regular exercise. You should have at least 30 minutes of exercise each day. Exercise can help you improve your fitness and your energy.
- Remember to do something you like everyday.



Your Checklist of important information to have:

- The names and contact details of the specialists who treated you:
 - Surgeon
 - Medical Oncologist
 - Radiation Oncologist
 - Specialist Breast Nurse
- Your Hospital record number.
- Written details of all treatments you received.
- Place of yearly mammogram.
- Month of yearly mammogram.
- Dates and results of previous mammograms.
- Who to contact if a problem arises.
- Breast awareness leaflets.
- Important phone numbers.

Your Follow-up Diary

Details of the specialists who treated you:

Surgeon: Name: _____

Hospital: _____

Phone: _____

Medical Oncologist: Name: _____

Hospital: _____

Phone: _____

Radiation Oncologist: Name: _____

Hospital: _____

Phone: _____

Specialist Breast Nurse: Name: _____

Hospital: _____

Phone: _____

Your Hospital Number: _____

Name of your symptomatic breast clinic:

Your treatment:

Date of surgery: _____

Type of chemotherapy: _____

Number of radiotherapy sessions: _____

Type of hormone treatment: _____

Your follow-up records

Year	Mammogram		GP check-up	
	Date	Result	Date	Result

Important contact details:

GP name and phone number: _____

Symptomatic Breast Clinic number: _____

X-ray department number: _____

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NCCP-COM-005-01
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