

Breast Cancer Companion Guide



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Alliance for Breast Cancer
Information & Support
BC & Yukon

INFORMATION KIT

WITH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF

CANADIAN
BREAST CANCER
FOUNDATION™



FONDATION
CANADIENNE DU
CANCER DU SEIN™

Start Here

1 Start Here

INFORMATION KIT:

Be Proactive

Being diagnosed with breast cancer can be frightening, confusing and overwhelming. You may have many questions and concerns. This **Breast Cancer Information Kit** was created to help you, your family and friends through this difficult time.

This Breast Cancer Companion Guide is the place to begin and will help you interact with the resources in this kit. Each section provides suggested readings, key questions to ask, and additional resources for each step along the journey.

Keep in mind, that every person with cancer is unique and your need for information and support will differ from others. You may not require some of the information included in this Kit, nor will you need to read it all at once. Simply take one step at a time. Ask questions, learn about your options, and trust what feels right to you.

The Breast Cancer Information Kit was developed by persons who have experienced breast cancer and professionals from the BC Cancer Agency, Victoria Breast Health Centre and the Canadian Cancer Society. The Kit is provided free of charge to those newly diagnosed with breast cancer, in BC and the Yukon, by the Alliance for Breast Cancer Information & Support, with the generous support of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, BC / Yukon Chapter.

What's included in your Kit:

- 📖 **BREAST CANCER COMPANION GUIDE**
- 📖 **BREAST CANCER NAVIGATION MAP**
An overview of the breast cancer journey developed by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, BC/Yukon Chapter.
- 📖 **INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE TO BREAST CANCER**
- 📖 **NUTRITION AND BREAST CANCER: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**
- 📖 **ABREAST IN THE WEST NEWSLETTER**
- 📖 **AFTER BREAST CANCER TREATMENT: WHAT NEXT?**



**SUGGESTED
DECISION
POINTS**



**SUGGESTED
RESOURCES
AND SUPPORT**



**QUESTIONS
YOU MAY WISH
TO ASK**



2 Test Results & Appointments

TEST RESULTS & APPOINTMENTS:

Get Organized

As you move through your breast cancer experience, it is important to keep your medical information organized and easily accessible, not just for yourself but for your health care providers. You may choose to become informed about expected medical procedures, and/or ask questions to make the most of every doctor appointment.

Helpful Tips:

- ☞ You may use this page to record important names and telephone numbers.
- ☞ You may choose to list your medical appointments on the worksheet on the back of this page.
- ☞ File test results in this kit –You can ask your doctors for copies of results from tests you have already had.
- ☞ Consider writing down questions in advance. You may ask a friend or family member to accompany you to appointments to take notes on your behalf.
- ☞ Ask questions until you understand what the doctor is saying.
- ☞ Begin a journal or put a calendar into this Kit to detail information and appointments.
- ☞ You are welcome to ask for a second opinion.
- ☞ Enlist the help of a professional cancer navigator. Call the Canadian Cancer Society's Cancer Information Service at 1.888.939.3333 to find out if this service is available in your area.

Important Contacts

Family Doctor

Telephone

Surgeon

Telephone

Medical Oncologist

Telephone

Radiation Oncologist

Telephone

Plastic Surgeon

Telephone

Nurse

Telephone

Counsellor

Telephone

Nutritionist

Telephone

Physiotherapist

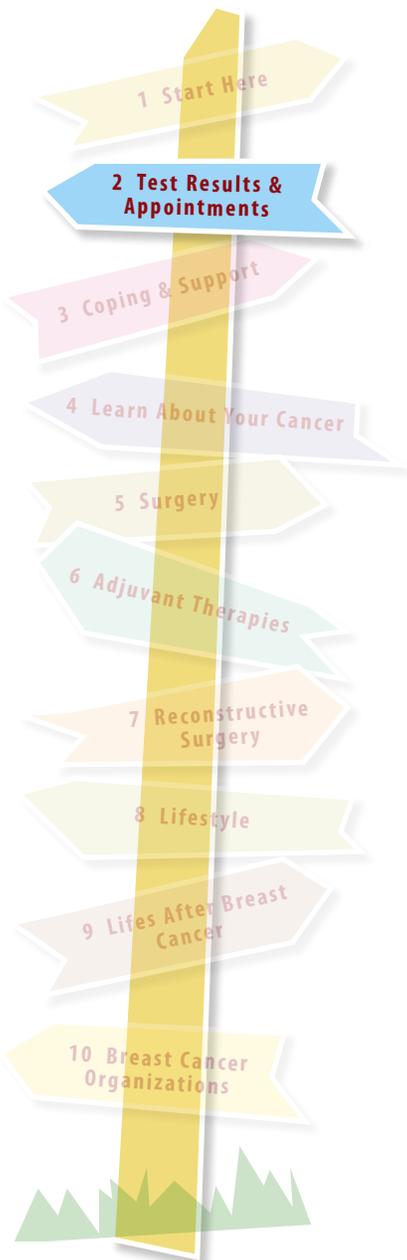
Telephone

Support Person

Telephone

Support Person

Telephone



COPING & SUPPORT:

Reach Out

There is no right or wrong way to feel after being diagnosed with breast cancer. Every woman is unique. Some people are comfortable talking about their diagnosis and asking for help, while others prefer not to share the information widely.

You may choose to turn to family and friends, co-workers, your faith or other community groups for support. Others have reported it helpful to speak to someone who has survived breast cancer. Remember, how you decide to share the news and the type of support you need is entirely up to you.

RESOURCES FOR FAMILY, CHILDREN AND FRIENDS

A selection of pamphlets, books and videos are available through the BC Cancer Agency at 1.888.675.8001 local 8001 and/or most public libraries.

Suggested Resources

INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE

SECTION 6

Strategies for Navigating the Cancer Care System

SECTION 12

Living with a diagnosis of breast cancer
How can your family and friends help you cope with breast cancer?

SECTION 13

Stress and relaxation

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

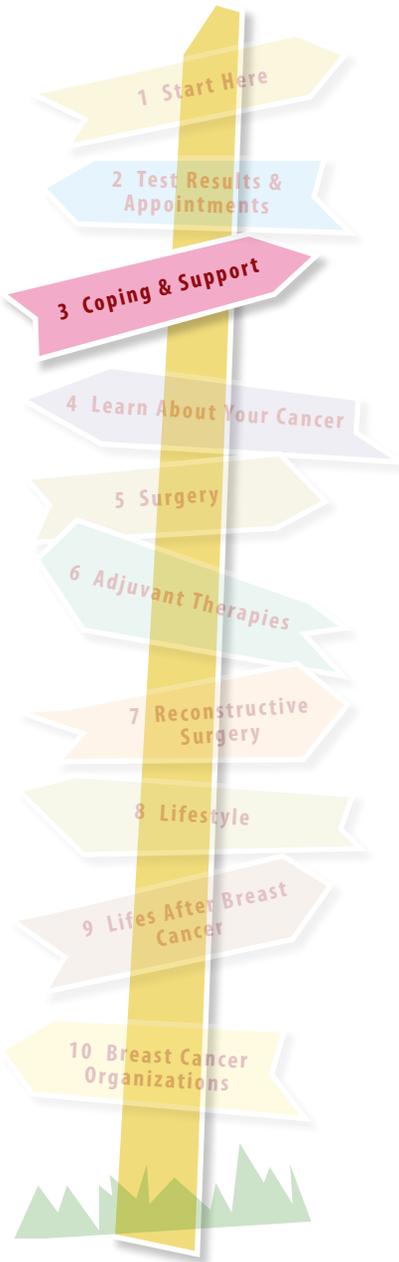
Canadian Cancer Society – Cancer Information Service

is a national, bilingual, toll free service offering comprehensive information about cancer and community resources such as support groups to cancer patients, their families, the general public and healthcare professionals. 1.888.939.3333

Canadian Cancer Society – Cancer Connection. This program matches you with a trained volunteer who has had a similar cancer experience. This program is for adults only. Call 1-888-939-3333 for Cancer Connection.

BC Cancer Agency – Offers professional patient and family counselling at no cost through its four regional cancer centres.

Vancouver	1.800.663.3333
Fraser Valley	1.800.523.2885
Vancouver Island	1.800.670.3322
Southern Interior	1.888.563.7773



PRACTICAL AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

FINANCES

Financial assistance may be available to you. Some people have coverage under their extended health care plans or employee benefit plans. These should be explored first. Other government agencies offer aid to those in need as does the Canadian Cancer Society's Emergency Aid Program. Travel discounts and special accommodations are available for people who have to travel outside their community for medical care. Call the Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Information Service at 1.888.939.3333 to determine if financial assistance is available to you.

TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

Travel assistance is provided by the Ministry of Health for rural BC and Yukon residents who need to travel on BC Ferries, various airlines and buses. In some communities, trained volunteers are available to drive people who do not have a means of transportation to and from treatment-related appointments. Call the Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Information Service 1.888.939.3333 for more information.

HOME CARE

If you feel the need for additional physical or emotional support after breast surgery or during treatment, a referral for home nursing care can be arranged. Other home services, such as assistance with groceries or meals, should be arranged and paid for privately. Ask your doctor, nurse, or local community health unit for more information.

ACCOMMODATIONS

For those who need to travel for cancer care, the Canadian Cancer Society operates lodges in Kelowna, Victoria and Vancouver. The daily rate includes three meals a day, 24-hour nursing supervision, volunteer support and other amenities. To stay, you must be mobile and able to manage your own personal care or be accompanied by a support person. Call Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Information Service 1.888.939.3333 for information about costs and registration.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR CANCER:

Now that you have an understanding of the typical breast cancer journey, you may wish to learn more about your specific type of breast cancer by following the “Suggested Resource” list.

Keep in mind the biopsies, mammograms and/or ultrasounds you have had to date, only show some of what is happening in the breast, not the whole story. Complete information on your cancer will be available after surgery, when the cancer and possibly lymph nodes have been removed and examined under a microscope. A pathology report (results of tissue examination) is completed and reviewed with you by your surgeon and/or oncologist. You may ask for a copy of the pathology report and place it in your kit.

BC CANCER AGENCY LIBRARY SERVICE

The BC Cancer Agency has various resources to assist in your learning process. Videos, tapes, medical journals and books can contribute to your knowledge and understanding of breast cancer.

Vancouver	1.888.675.8001
Fraser Valley	1.800.523.2885
Vancouver Island	1.800.670.3322
Southern Interior	1.888.563.7773

Suggested Resources

INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE

SECTION 1 AND 2

- Breast anatomy and function
- What is cancer?
- How common is breast cancer?
- What causes breast cancer?

SECTION 5

- The pathology report: Reading the cancer’s telltale signs
- In situ cancer: Cancer that hasn’t invaded or spread
- Types of invasive breast cancer

SECTION 6

- An overview of breast cancer treatment
- Staging and Prognosis

SECTION 15

- Breast cancer and pregnancy
- Familial breast cancer and genetic testing
- Male breast cancer

WEBSITE REFERENCE

Inflammatory Breast Cancer

www.ibcsupport.org

This website only applies to women with inflammatory breast cancer.

Young Women and Breast Cancer

<http://www.cbcn.ca/youngwomen/>

This website provides information on issues that are unique to younger diagnosed women.

Fertile HOPE

<http://www.fertilehope.org>

This US website provides reproductive information to cancer patients whose medical treatments present the risk of infertility



MY BREAST CANCER SUMMARY

1. Date of Diagnosis: Day _____ Month _____ Year _____

2. Preliminary Breast Cancer Information

If you have had a biopsy or ultrasound to diagnose your breast cancer, you may have some preliminary information that you can record here. Otherwise, this information will be available after your surgery from the pathology report.

My biopsy report says that I have

Non Invasive

Ductal Carcinoma In Situ (DCIS)

Invasive

Ductal Lobular Inflammatory

Other _____

My biopsy report says the cancer is:

Grade 1 (low) Grade 2 (Intermediate)

Grade 3 (High) Doesn't say

My biopsy report says that lymphatic/vascular invasion is:

Present (yes, it has been found)

Absent (no, it has not been found)

Doesn't Say

My biopsy report says hormone receptor status is:

ER-Positive ER-Negative Doesn't say

My ultrasound report says the size of the cancer is _____ mm/cm.

3. Breast Cancer Information After Surgery

According to the pathology report my breast cancer is:

Non Invasive

Ductal Carcinoma In Situ (DCIS)

Invasive

Ductal Lobular Inflammatory

Other _____

My breast cancer is _____ mm/cm in size.

The edges (margins) of the breast tissue removed are clear of cancer cells? Yes No

Lymph nodes were removed from my armpit(s) (axillary node dissection)? Yes No

The total number of lymph nodes removed was _____

The number of lymph nodes that contain cancer cells is _____

The hormone receptor results are:

Estrogen receptor: Positive Negative Don't Know

Progesterone receptor: Positive Negative Don't Know

4. Breast Cancer Information From Your Oncologist

My "T Stage" is:

T1 T2 T3

My "Node Stage" is:

N0 N1 N2 N3

SURGERY:**What Is Right For You?**

The majority of women have surgery first to remove the cancer in the breast and usually some lymph nodes under the arm. Less often, it is recommended that treatment with chemotherapy or hormones and/or radiation occurs before surgery. These individuals will be referred to a cancer specialist (oncologist) first, to determine the treatment plan.

There are different types of breast surgery. In order to decide what type of surgery is best for you, you may wish to learn about the options and discuss with your surgeon. “Questions to Ask Your Surgeon” is located on the back of this page, and can help you make decisions about your surgery. Remember, there is no “right” decision, only the one that is right for you.

SURGICAL OPTIONS:

- ☞ **Breast Conserving Surgery** - removal of the breast cancer, but conserves the breast. Also called lumpectomy, partial mastectomy and segmental resection. Lymph nodes under the arm may or may not be removed. Radiation therapy is almost always recommended after breast conserving surgery.
- ☞ **Mastectomy** – removal of the entire breast tissue. Lymph nodes under the arm may or may not be removed.
- ☞ **Breast Reconstruction** – surgery to create a new breast after mastectomy. May be done at the time of mastectomy (immediate reconstruction) or later (delayed reconstruction) See the **Reconstructive Surgery** section for more information.

Suggested Resources**INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE****SECTION 7**

The doctor has suggested surgery: What should I do?
Types of breast surgery
What type of surgery is best for me?
Hospitalization and recovery from surgery

SECTION 9

Radiation Therapy: What is it?
Who benefits from radiation therapy?
Side effects of radiation therapy

SECTION 12

Physical therapy (after surgery) and lymphedema
Reconstructive Surgery

DECISION TOOL:

“What Do I Prefer? Making Decisions About the Removal of My Breast Cancer”. Call the Canadian Cancer Society Cancer Information Service at 1.888.939.3333 or visit www.cancer.ca

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

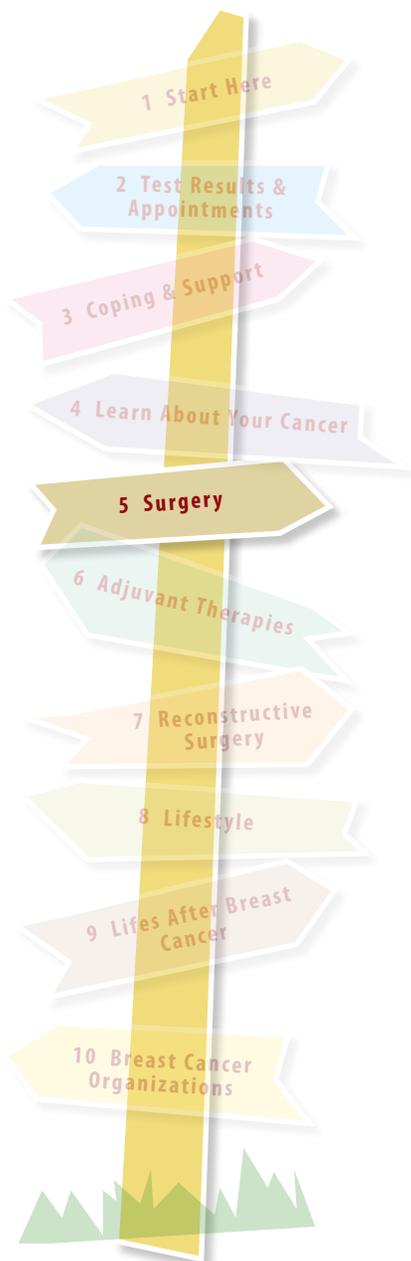
Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Information Services is available to help answer any questions you have about cancer and community resources such as how to find a breast prosthesis in your home town. Call 1.888.939.3333 or visit www.cancer.ca

PHYSIOTHERAPY

www.bcphysio.org
This website is useful to find a physiotherapist in your community. Look under the women’s health section.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Canadian Cancer Society – Cancer Connection will match you with a trained volunteer according to what is important to you. You may wish to speak to someone who had a treatment you are considering or someone in a similar living situation. Call 1.888.939.3333 for Cancer Connection.



IN MANY CASES YOUR SURGEON WILL SPEND TIME TALKING TO YOU ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS. THESE ARE THE KINDS OF QUESTIONS THAT SHOULD BE COVERED. IF NOT YOU MAY WISH TO REFER TO THESE.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SURGEON BEFORE SURGERY

What type of breast cancer do I have? What size is it?

What type of surgery would you recommend for me and why?

With a mastectomy, am I a candidate for immediate reconstruction? Why or why not?

Do you plan to remove any lymph nodes? If so, how many?

Will the sentinel node technique be used for the lymph node surgery?

Will I need to have Radiation Therapy after surgery?

How long does the surgery take?

At which hospital will I have my surgery? When and how will I be notified?

How long will I be in hospital?

How will the incision be closed?

Will I go home with a drain after surgery?

Will I need home nursing care when I go home?

Will my range of motion on my surgery side be affected?

Will I need to wear a prosthesis?

When can I return to work?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SURGEON BEFORE LEAVING THE HOSPITAL

What activities can I do with my arm that is affected by surgery?

What type of activities should I avoid?

Are there any special exercises for my affected arm?

What pain or discomfort can I expect and how long will it last?

Who do I contact if I develop any problems with my incision(s).

What medication will I take if I have any pain? Will I be given a prescription?

When can I shower or take a bath?

When can I remove my bandage? Is there a special type of dressing I should use?

How do I care for my drain at home?

How much and what color of drainage is normal?

When are stitches/clips/drains removed?

Are there any limits on my diet?

When and how do I make my next appointment with the surgeon?

When will my pathology report be available?

When can I drive?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SURGEON AT YOUR POST-OPERATIVE VISIT

Based on my pathology report, can you tell me if there is a possibility I will require Chemotherapy?

What is the order of additional therapies after surgery?

Now that my incision(s) is healing, is there anything specific I should be doing?

What changes will I notice in my breast/underarm in the weeks/months to come?

Who do I contact if I develop any problems with my incision(s)?

Do I need to make another appointment with my surgeon for follow-up care? If so, when?

Will I be referred to a Cancer Centre for consultation or any further treatment? If so, which Cancer Centre will I be referred to?

How is the referral made? When?

Who will notify me of my appointment?

ADJUVANT THERAPIES:

Radiation, Chemotherapy & Hormonal Treatment: Learn, then decide

Breast cancer is treated by a team of experts who use a combination of surgery and adjuvant therapies (radiation, chemotherapy and hormonal therapy).

After surgery, your surgeon will send your information to the BC Cancer Agency Centre nearest you. Once they have received and processed your information, you will be scheduled for an appointment with an oncologist (cancer specialist).

- ☞ Medical oncologists specialize in chemotherapy and hormone therapy.
- ☞ Radiation oncologists specialize in radiation treatments and hormone therapy.

Your oncologist will have reviewed your case, possibly discussed it with colleagues, and will recommend a treatment plan tailored to your particular cancer. The kind of questions that should be covered are on the back of this page. You do not have to make a decision on the spot, unless you feel prepared to do so, nor will any treatments happen the first day.

Radiation Therapy – is use of high-energy rays to kill cancer cells in one specific part of the body.

Chemotherapy Therapy – is the use of drugs to kill cancer cells anywhere in the body.

Hormone Therapy – is use of drugs to “catch” any cancer cells that may have spread throughout the body over an extended period of time.

Suggested Resources

INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE

SECTION 8

Additional treatment following surgery
Treatment of in situ breast cancer

SECTION 15

Clinical research: Looking for better answers

SECTION 10

Chemotherapy: What is it?
Who benefits from chemotherapy?
Side effects of chemotherapy

SECTION 9

Radiation Therapy: What is it?
Who benefits from radiation therapy?
Side effects of radiation therapy

SECTION 11

Hormone therapy: What is it and who benefits from it?
Side effects of hormone therapy

SUPPORT SERVICES

BC Cancer Agency Services

Support services help patients cope during all phases of the cancer experience and play a valuable role in supporting the mind, body and immune system.

- ☞ Nutritional guidance
- ☞ Relaxation, art and music therapy
- ☞ Counselling for individual, family and group
- ☞ Spiritual and religious care
- ☞ Rehabilitation employment counselling

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Your community may have a variety of support services available such as home care services and wig salons. Call the Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Information Service 1.888.939.3333 or visit www.cancer.ca



IN MANY CASES YOUR ONCOLOGIST WILL SPEND TIME TALKING TO YOU ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS. THESE ARE THE KINDS OF QUESTIONS THAT SHOULD BE COVERED. IF NOT YOU MAY WISH TO REFER TO THESE

**QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT
CHEMOTHERAPY**

Do I need chemotherapy? If yes, what type?

What are my options regarding the drugs I can take?

Are there clinical trials I should consider?

How will it be given? How often? Over what time period?

How many drugs will I be taking at one time?

What are the short-term side effects? When do they begin? How can they be reduced?

What are the long-term side effects? When do they begin? How can they be reduced?

Will these drugs cause me to gain or lose weight?

Will I lose my hair? If so, how soon? Where can I find a good wig or head covering? Is it covered by health insurance?

How will I feel after treatment? When should I start to feel better?

Where will I go for treatment?

Who pays for the drugs?

Will I need help with housework or work commitments during treatment?

Should I take leave of absence from work?

**QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT
RADIATION THERAPY**

Do I need radiation therapy?

Where will I go for treatment?

Are there clinical trials I should consider?

What is radiation therapy like? Will it hurt?

How long will each session take? How many sessions will I need?

What short-term side effects should I expect? What can I do to reduce the risk of side effects?

What long-term side effects should I expect? What can I do to reduce the risk of side effects?

Will the radiation therapy affect other organs?

What precautions should I take before treatment?

What do I need to know about taking care of my skin during radiation treatment?

How long will it take for the area to heal?

Are there any activities I should avoid during my radiation treatments (e.g. swimming, hot tubs)?

Can I work during my radiation treatments?

Will I be able to drive myself home after treatment?

**QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT
HORMONAL THERAPY**

Will I need Hormone therapy? Why or why not?

What are my options?

Are there clinical trials I should consider?

How will it be given? How often? Over what period of time?

What are the short- and long-term side effects?

Will I gain or lose weight?

Should I be on a special diet during treatment?

What do these drugs cost? Who pays for them?

RECONSTRUCTION SURGERY:**Consider All Options**

If you and your doctor decide a mastectomy is the best surgical option for you, you may want to consider a prosthesis or breast reconstruction. This is a personal decision and you may choose not to consider either of them.

Breast Prosthesis – a cotton, foam or silicone gel form that inserts into a mastectomy bra or adheres to your skin. Call the Cancer Information Service to locate a store near to your home and to find out about purchasing costs and coverage.

SURGICAL BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

- ☞ Immediate breast reconstruction is completed at the same time as the mastectomy.
- ☞ Delayed breast reconstruction is completed at a later time. There is no time limit as to when this procedure can be performed

Breast reconstruction can utilise implants or tissue from elsewhere in your body. It is performed by a Plastic Surgeon. The kind of questions to ask your plastic surgeon are on the back of this page. Currently, the BC Medical Services Plan covers all the breast reconstruction surgery for persons with breast cancer.

Suggested Resources**INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE****SECTION 12**

Reconstructive surgery

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Available through the BC Cancer Agency library at 1.888.675.8001 local 8001 and through some public libraries:

- ☞ A Woman's Decision: Breast Care, Treatment and Reconstruction - by Berger and Bostwick,
- ☞ Show Me - by Milton S. Hershey Medical Centre
- ☞ Breast Reconstruction Using TRAM Video - UBC Breast Reconstruction Program
- ☞ Woman to Woman: Breast Cancer and Reconstruction Options - Video by Bosom Buddies

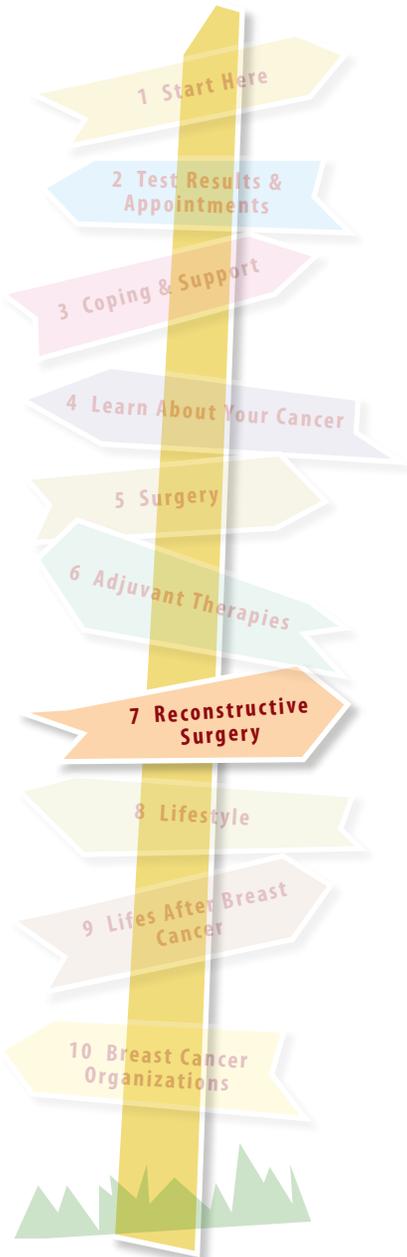
UBC - Breast Reconstruction Program

604.822.8056

<http://www.vch.ca/breastreconstruction>

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Call the Canadian Cancer Society's Cancer Connection Program at 1.888.939.3333 to speak with another individual who has had reconstruction surgery similar to what you are considering.



IN MANY CASES YOUR PLASTIC SURGEON WILL SPEND TIME TALKING TO YOU ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS. THESE ARE THE KINDS OF QUESTIONS THAT SHOULD BE COVERED. IF NOT YOU MAY WISH TO REFER TO THESE.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PLASTIC SURGEON ABOUT BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

Am I a good candidate for breast reconstruction?

Immediate or delayed?

If so, what kind should I have and when?

What are the risks and benefits of this type of reconstruction? Where will it be done?

What steps should I go through before, during and after my reconstructive surgery?

How long will I be in hospital and how long will it take for me to recover?

How will my new breast look and feel after surgery?
How well will it match my other breast? How will it change over time?

How often do revisions or further surgeries take place?

Will I be able to find abnormalities (signs of cancer) in my new breast?

Can I still get a mammogram?

How much will reconstruction cost? Does provincial health insurance or other health insurance cover the costs?

LIFESTYLE & COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES:

Be Good To Yourself

Lifestyle choices can play an important role in coping with the physical and emotional effects of breast cancer.

People recovering from cancer treatments may want to

1. **Maintain a healthy diet**
2. **Exercise regularly**
3. **Sleep and conserve energy**

The most important thing to remember: **Take things at your own pace.** Respect your physical and emotional needs and decide on a lifestyle that works for you.

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

Many women seek information on the holistic complementary approach and include a variety of gentler, less invasive therapies in their recovery. Options range from nutrition and relaxation programs, herbal remedies, and immune stimulants to therapeutic touch, visual imagery and massage. It is important to note that these complementary therapies are used alongside or in addition to standard cancer treatments.

Side effects still do occur, and some therapies may even interfere with traditional cancer treatments. If you are interested in finding out more about a particular therapy or treatment or are currently using one, it is important to tell your oncologist.

Suggested Resources

INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE

SECTION 13

Nutrition
Stress and relaxation

SECTION 15

Alternative and complementary therapies
Health information on the Internet

Nutrition and Breast Cancer: What You Need To Know

Booklet included in this kit.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Dial a Dietician 1.800.667.3438

BC Cancer Agency Nutrition Services

Vancouver	1.800.663.3333
Fraser Valley	1.800.523.2885
Vancouver Island	1.800.670.3322
Southern Interior	1.888.563.7773

Centre for Integrated Healing

604.734.7125 www.healing.bc.ca

An integrated complementary cancer care program for people with cancer and their families.

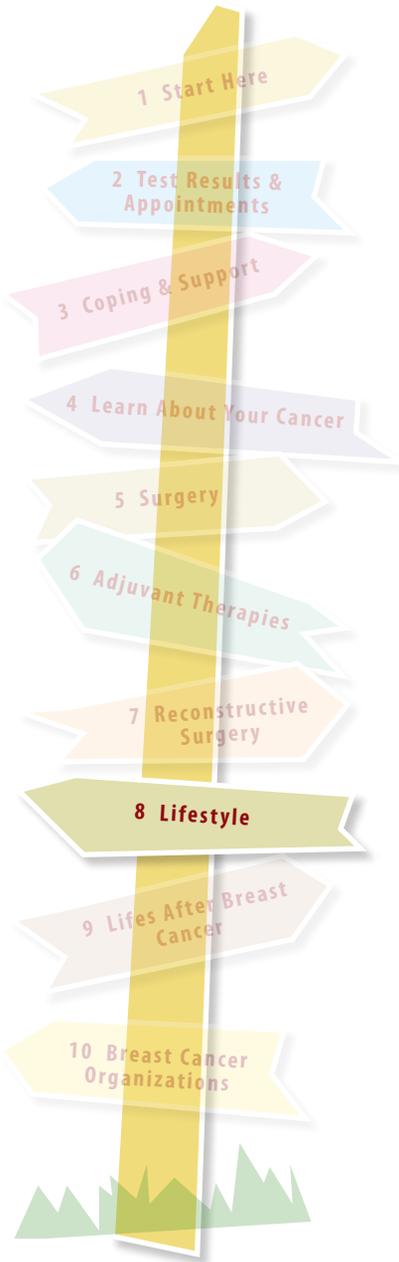
WEBSITE REFERENCES

See back of page for tips on surfing the web.

BC Cancer Agency Unconventional Therapies

www.bc.cancer.ca

Visit Patient/Public Information to find the Unconventional Therapies Section.



TIPS TO SURFING THE WEB FOR INFORMATION

TIPS TO SURFING THE WEB FOR INFORMATION

The Internet can be useful to seek information about specific issues that you are facing. It can also be a challenging maze with a mass of overwhelming information from unknown sources. By following the guidelines below you can find sites that are credible and accurate. Surf responsibly!

SPONSORSHIP

Who sponsors the site? Is it a credible non-profit group dedicated to sharing information or a product-selling site? You can figure this out by reading the “who we are sections” or who the “contributors or sponsors” are. If this information cannot be found easily – Beware!

CREDIBLE

Ask yourself if this source of information is credible. Is it run by an organization that must be accountable to the public such as a government, hospital or library site?

VERIFICATION

Are you able to verify this information on other websites, medical books or journals?

TIMELY

Is this site up to date and current. What are dates that you notice within the pages, articles, or body of the site?

www.canadian-health-network.ca provides links to various accurate health sites

www.quackwatch.com provides insight on questionable medical procedures and complimentary & alternative therapies.

LIFE AFTER BREAST CANCER:

Make a Follow Up Plan

As you may be discovering, the breast cancer journey continues beyond the diagnosis and treatment phase.

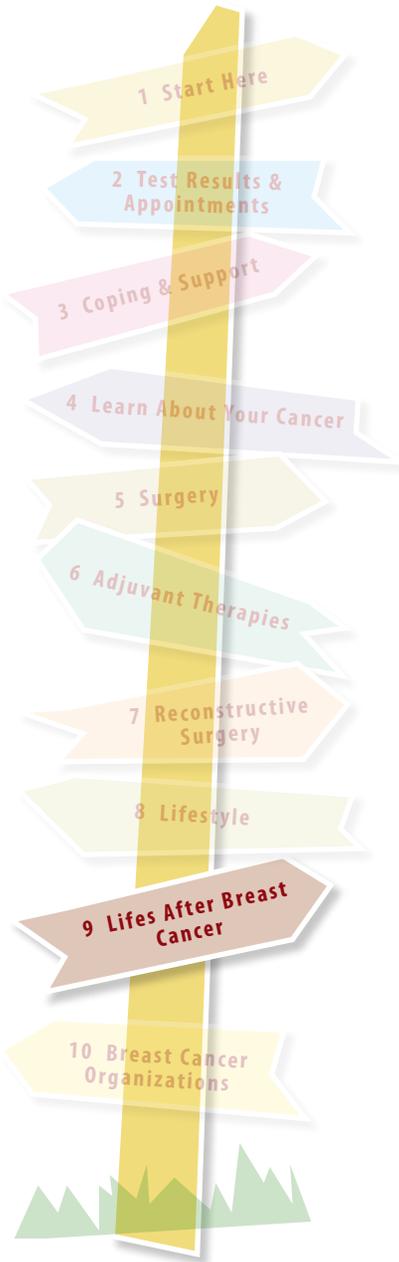
It is a real accomplishment to have completed your treatment for breast cancer. However, after treatment you may experience some feelings or encounter some issues that are new to you or come as a surprise.

Common themes include:

- ☞ Trying to “find yourself”
- ☞ Re-Evaluation of life and spirituality
- ☞ Changes in your body and energy

Every woman – and their breast cancer – is completely unique. The level of follow-up care you need, and coping strategies you prefer, may be completely different from others. An individual follow-up plan will be made with your oncologist.

The **Follow Up Care** worksheet on the back of this page will help you cover all contingencies in your follow-up plan.



Suggested Resources

INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE

SECTION 14

- Follow-up: Support, side effects and concerns about recurrence
- Treatment of local recurrence
- Treatment of recurrence elsewhere in the body

SECTION 15

- Awareness and advocacy

After Breast Cancer Treatment: What Next? An Awareness Guide. Booklet included in this kit.

Abreast in the West Newsletter

www.abreastinthewest.ca

A current copy is included in this kit.

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Canadian Cancer Society– Cancer Connection

Can help you to find a support group, or to speak to a trained peer volunteer either on the phone or in-person. Call 1.888.939.3333.

BC Cancer Agency / Patient & Family Counselling Services.

Vancouver	1.800.663.3333
Fraser Valley	1.800.523.2885
Vancouver Island	1.800.670.3322
Southern Interior	1.888.563.7773

WEBSITE REFERENCES

Lymphovenous Canada

www.lymphovenous-canada.ca

Information on Lymphedema prevention and treatment.

FOLLOW-UP CARE AFTER BREAST CANCER TREATMENT

Purpose of follow up care:

It is important for you to receive regular check-ups after your breast cancer treatment ends. A follow-up program allows you to bring any concerns you have to the attention of a medical professional and may help find cancer early should it return.

Your family doctor is a key person in your follow-up program. If you have new symptoms or concerns, first visit your family doctor, and he/she will give you a referral if needed.

In most cases, you will not need extra tests during family doctor visits, unless there is a new concern.

Your Responsibility:

You can take an active role in your care. Your program begins with:

Monthly breast self-examination (BSE). BSE can help to detect changes in your breasts. It is the best way to know what is normal for you. If you find a change, visit your family doctor as soon as you can.

For more information on learning breast self-examination, ask your health care professional or family doctor.

If you have had breast conserving surgery (lumpectomy):

After your treatment ends, visit your family doctor every six months for the first five years. At the follow-up visits, your doctor will examine your breasts and the lymph node areas.

Once a year (starting six months after your treatment ends), you should have a regular mammogram.

After five years, visit your family doctor once a year for follow-up and to set up a mammogram of both breasts.

If you have had a mastectomy:

After your treatment ends visit your family doctor every six months for the first five years. Your family doctor will check the mastectomy scar, chest wall, and lymph node areas, as well as the remaining breast.

Once a year you should have a mammogram of the remaining breast.

After five years, visit your family doctor once a year for follow-up and to set up a mammogram of the remaining breast.

If you have been put on hormone therapy:

For people with early stage breast cancer, hormone therapy is taken for at least five years. In some cases, hormone therapy may be prescribed for a longer time. Hormone therapy drugs are covered by the BC Cancer Agency.

The BC Cancer Agency's regional cancer centres provide the first supply of this medication, during your last visit.

For refills, your family doctor will write out a prescription to get the medication from either a BC Cancer Agency pharmacy or your local hospital pharmacy.

Aromatase Inhibitors (AI)

If you are taking hormone therapies such as aromatase inhibitors (Arimidex®, Femara®, Aromasin®), you will need to have a bone density scan on a regular basis.

A bone density study is usually taken at baseline and then repeated at 18 - 24 months. Further bone scans are done depending on the results of the initial tests.

Your family doctor should send you for a cholesterol baseline lipids test to monitor any increases.

A daily total of 1500 mg of calcium and 800 IU of vitamin D are recommended. This can come from a mix of both food and vitamin supplements

Weight bearing exercise at least 3 times a week is strongly recommended

BC CANCER AGENCY

www.bccancer.bc.ca

Vancouver Cancer Centre (VCC)	604.877.6000	1.800.663.3333
Fraser Valley Cancer Centre (FVCC)	604.930.2098	1.800.523.2885
Vancouver Island Cancer Centre (VICC)	250.370.8228	1.800.670.3322
Cancer Centre of the Southern Interior (CCSI)	250.712.3900	1.888.563.7773

The BC Cancer Agency serves people living in British Columbia and the Yukon through four regional centres, 16 chemotherapy clinics operated in partnership with regional hospitals, and physicians who travel to smaller towns to see patients. Each centre (located in Vancouver, Surrey, Victoria and Kelowna) provides a full range of cancer services, including assessment, diagnosis and treatment, support programs, counseling and follow-up care.

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY – CANCER INFORMATION SERVICE

www.cancer.ca 1.888.939.3333

The Canadian Cancer Society is a volunteer-based organization dedicated to researching a cure, providing education and patient services, and enhancing the quality of life of people living with cancer. It operates a toll-free Cancer Information Service in English and French from 9 am to 6 pm Monday to Friday. Interpretation services are available for other languages. The on-line website provides information on cancer and community resources for the general public.

ALLIANCE FOR BREAST CANCER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT, BC & YUKON

www.abreastinthewest.ca

The Alliance for Breast Cancer Information and Support is a network of persons living with breast cancer, health care professionals and related organizations, that work to ensure resources and services are accessible to everyone affected by breast cancer. It produces and distributes this Information Kit and publishes a free quarterly newsletter, Abreast in the West.

CANADIAN BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION

www.cbcf.org 1.800.561.6111

The Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation is the country's leading volunteer-based organization dedicated to the fight against breast cancer. It works to fund, support and advocate for breast cancer research, education and awareness programs, early diagnosis and effective treatment, and a positive quality of life for those living with breast cancer. It is also the driving force behind Run for the Cure, the largest and most successful fundraising event for breast cancer in Canada.

CANADIAN BREAST CANCER NETWORK

www.cbcn.ca 1.800.685.8820

The Canadian Breast Cancer Network is the voice of breast cancer survivors. It is a resource for breast cancer news, events and advocacy, connects you to local support groups, and offers inspiration through survivor stories and experiences. The website includes sections specific to younger women, multi-cultural resources and advanced breast cancer resources.