

Breast Cancer Companion Guide



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INFORMATION KIT

START HERE

1 Start Here

2 Test Results & Appointments

3 Coping & Support

4 Learn About Your Cancer

5 Surgery

6 Adjuvant Therapies

7 Reconstructive Surgery

8 Lifestyle

9 Life After Breast Cancer

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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 during this difficult time.

This Breast Cancer Companion Guide is the place to begin and will help you interact with the resources in this kit. Sections 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 Alliance for Breast Cancer Information & Support, BC Cancer Agency, Victoria Breast Health Centre and the Canadian Cancer Society.

What's included in your Kit:

- BREAST CANCER COMPANION GUIDE
- INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE TO BREAST CANCER
- EXERCISES AFTER BREAST CANCER: A GUIDE FOR WOMEN
- A NUTRITION GUIDE FOR WOMEN WITH BREAST CANCER
- ABREAST & THE REST NEWSLETTER
- AFTER BREAST CANCER TREATMENT: WHAT NEXT?
- A PARALLEL JOURNEY: MY PARTNER HAS BREAST CANCER - HOW CAN I HELP?

TIMELINE

FROM DIAGNOSIS TO SURGERY

APPROXIMATELY 2-4 WEEKS
(SECTION 5-SURGERY)

PATHOLOGY REPORT COMPLETE

APPROXIMATELY 2 WEEKS AFTER SURGERY (SECTION 4-LEARN ABOUT YOUR CANCER)

1ST MEETING AT A CANCER CLINIC

4-8 WEEKS AFTER SURGERY
(SECTION 2-TEST RESULTS & APPOINTMENTS)
(SECTION 6-ADJUVANT THERAPY)

FIRST FOLLOW UP VISIT

6-12 WEEKS AFTER ACTIVE TREATMENT

FOLLOW UP PROGRAM

- Family Physician or Cancer Care Centre visits every 6 months for 5 years.
- Annual Mammograms (Section 9-Follow up Care Worksheet)

DIAGNOSIS

SURGERY HEALING

ACTIVE TREATMENTS & VISITS AT CANCER CLINIC
Chemotherapy: 3-6 months, Radiation Therapy: 3 1/2-6 weeks, Hormonal Therapy: 5+ year duration

FOLLOW UP

IN HOSPITAL

0 to 2 days

INCISION HEALED

Within a few weeks

ADDITIONAL CANCER TREATMENTS MAY BE REQUIRED

(Section 6 – Adjuvant Therapy)

Chemotherapy 3-6 months

Radiation Therapy 3 1/2-6 weeks

Hormonal Therapy 5+ year duration

TEST RESULTS & APPOINTMENTS

Important Contacts

1 Start Here

2 Test Results & Appointments

3 Coping & Support

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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. (see back of page)
- If you do not feel comfortable with any members of your health care team, you may ask for a second opinion.

Cancer Navigator

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 AND SUPPORT

Suggested Resources

1 Start Here

2 Test Results & Appointments

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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.

INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE

SECTION 6

Strategies for Navigating the Cancer Care System

SECTION 12

Living with a diagnosis of breast cancer: Tips for you, your family and your friends

SECTION 13

Stress and relaxation

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Canadian Cancer Society – Cancer Information Service is a national, multi-lingual, 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 six regional cancer centres.

Abbotsford	1.877.547.3777
Centre for the North	1.855.775.7300
Fraser Valley	1.800.523.2885
Southern Interior	1.888.563.7773
Vancouver	1.800.663.3333
Vancouver Island	1.800.670.3322

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 Emergency Aid Program. Travel discounts and special accommodations are available for people who have to travel outside their community for medical care.

BC Cancer Agency
1.800.663.3333 x 672194 www.bccancer.bc.ca
Free booklet "Financial Information for Cancer Patients"

Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Information Service
1.888.939.3333 www.cancer.ca

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, Prince George 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. Hotels at reduced rates are also available close by the cancer centres. Call Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Information Service 1.888.939.3333 for information about these services.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR CANCER

Suggested Resources

1 Start Here

2 Test Results & Appointments

3 Coping & Support

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5 Surgery

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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.

Abbotsford	1.877.547.3777 x 646827
Centre for the North	1.888.675.8001 x 8001
Fraser Valley	1.800.523.2885 x 654576
Southern Interior	1.888.563.7773 x 686821
Vancouver	1.888.675.8001 x 8001
Vancouver Island	1.800.670.3322 x 695517

YUKON CANCER NAVIGATOR

In the Yukon, the Cancer Navigator is available to assist with cancer information as well as practical resources such as travel, home care and financial information. The Cancer Navigator is located at the Whitehorse General Hospital. Call 867.393.8853

INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE

SECTION 1 AND 2

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

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.

www.rethinkbreastcancer.com

A resource for young women with breast cancer

Fertile Future

1.877.467.3066 www.fertilefuture.ca

A Canadian network dedicated to providing information, education and financial assistance to cancer patients who wish to pursue fertility preservation.

MY BREAST CANCER SUMMARY

Date of Diagnosis Day _____ Month _____ Year _____

You have had a biopsy to diagnose your breast cancer and by now may have already had your surgery to remove it. After surgery, your surgeon will discuss your pathology results with you. This summary is a great place to record the important aspects of the pathology report to keep as a record for future use. You may ask your surgeon for a copy of your pathology report.

I had

- Breast Conserving Surgery (partial mastectomy or lumpectomy)
- Mastectomy

According to the pathology report my breast cancer is:

Non Invasive

- Ductal Carcinoma In Situ (DCIS)
- Lobular Carcinoma In Situ (LCIS)

Invasive

- Ductal
- Lobular
- Inflammatory

Other _____

My breast cancer is _____mm/cm in size.

My report says the cancer is :

- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3

The edges (margins) of the breast tissue removed are clear of cancer cells?

- Yes
- No

Lymph nodes were removed from my armpit

- Yes
- No

by

- Sentinel node biopsy
- Axillary node dissection

The total number of lymph nodes removed was _____

The number of lymph nodes that contain cancer cells were _____

My report says that Lymphatic Invasion is:

- Present
- Absent

My report says that Vascular Invasion is:

- Present
- Absent

My "T Stage" is:

- T1
- T2
- T3

My "Node Stage" is:

- N0
- N1
- N2
- N3

My "HER-2 Status" is:

- Positive
- Negative

My Estrogen receptors are:

- Positive
- Negative

My Progesterone receptors are:

- Positive
- Negative

SURGERY

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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

Exercise, physical therapy and management of lymphedema
Reconstructive surgery

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Exercises after Breast Surgery: A guide for women

Booklet included in this kit

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Mastectomy Supplies

Breast Prosthesis and special brassieres are available for those who have had a mastectomy or partial mastectomy. To help you locate where to purchase mastectomy supplies in your community or how to receive gentle-used donated mastectomy supplies please call the Cancer Information Service at 1.888.939.3333 or visit www.bc.cancer.ca.

PHYSIOTHERAPY

www.bcphysio.org

This website is useful to find a physiotherapist in your community. Enter ‘Women’s Health’ in the ‘Type of Physiotherapy’ within the FIND A PHYSIO section.

LYMPHEDEMA

Dr. Vodder’s International School www.vodderschool.com

Manual Lymph Drainage and Compression Therapy are available in BC by registered, training therapists. Lymphedema is a condition which may occur due to the removal of lymph nodes and having radiation therapy.

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

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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 – 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 11

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 10

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, therapeutic touch and mindfulness meditation
- Counselling for individual, family and group
- 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

LOOK GOOD FEEL BETTER

Helps you manage appearance related affects of cancer treatments such as hair loss. To locate the nearest program to you, call 1.800.914.5665 or visit www.lgfb.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?

RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY

Suggested Resources

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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.

INTELLIGENT PATIENT GUIDE

SECTION 12

Reconstructive surgery

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Available through the BC Cancer Agency Library at 1.888.675.8001 x 8001 and through some public libraries.

- Understanding Breast Reconstruction 8th Edition (2005) by S. Denton & D. Coats
- Understanding Breast Reconstruction Surgery: Is this for me? (2007) DVD by BC Cancer Agency
- Breast Reconstruction Using TRAM Flap (2003) DVD by UBC Breast Reconstruction Program
- The Breast Reconstruction Guidebook 2nd Edition (2005) by K. Steligo

Breast Reconstruction Program

www.breastreconstruction.vch.ca

This website provides information on breast reconstruction options including videos.

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?

If you are an active individual you should inquire as to how this type of surgery may affect the activities you participate in.

LIFESTYLE

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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

Complementary and alternative treatments

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A Nutrition Guide for Women with Breast Cancer

Booklet included in this kit.

HealthLink BC

Call 811 anywhere in BC
Pharmacy, Nurse and Dietitian Services 24/7

BC Cancer Agency Nutrition Services

Abbotsford	1.877.547.3777
Centre for the North	1.855.775.7300
Fraser Valley	1.800.523.2885
Southern Interior	1.888.563.7773
Vancouver	1.800.663.3333
Vancouver Island	1.800.670.3322

Inspire Health

604.734.7125 www.inspirehealth.ca
An integrated complementary cancer program.

WEBSITE REFERENCES

See back of page for tips on surfing the web.

BC Cancer Agency Complementary Therapies

www.bccancer.bc.ca

The Complementary Therapies page (under Patient/Public Info) provides links to the Natural Standard database and other useful websites to help you evaluate complementary and alternative therapies.

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.publichealth.gc.ca The Public Health Agency of Canada provides links and information

www.medlineplus.gov Medline Plus - an information service from the U.S. National Library of Medicine

LIFE AFTER BREAST CANCER

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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

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

After Breast Cancer Treatment: What Next? An Awareness Guide

Booklet included in this kit.

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Canadian Cancer Society– Cancer Connection

Will match you with trained volunteer(s) according to similar treatments or living situations. They will also have a list of current support groups if available in your community. Call 1.888.939.3333 for Cancer Connection.

BC Cancer Agency / Patient & Family Counselling Services.

Support services for individuals, families and groups

Abbotsford	1.877.547.3777
Centre for the North	1.855.775.7300
Fraser Valley	1.800.523.2885
Southern Interior	1.888.563.7773
Vancouver	1.800.663.3333
Vancouver Island	1.800.670.3322

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 1000 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 Foundation is proud to provide funding for the Breast Cancer Information Kit

The BC Cancer Foundation is the bridge that connects philanthropic support and research breakthroughs in cancer knowledge. As the fundraising partner of the BC Cancer Agency and the largest charitable funder of cancer research in this province, we enable donors to make contributions to leading-edge research that has a direct impact on improvements to cancer care for patients in British Columbia. We fund with the goal of finding solutions.

As an independent charitable organization, we raise funds exclusively for the BC Cancer Agency that support innovative cancer research and compassionate enhancements to patient care.

Our Vision

A world free from cancer

With philanthropy and research working together, we can achieve our vision of a world free from cancer. As partners in discovery, philanthropy provides the fuel that enables research to make revolutionary advances in knowledge. Both partners are needed to spark change. The impact this partnership has for cancer patients in BC is momentous.

Our Cause

Supporting world-renowned cancer research in BC

Exciting discoveries provide evidence that leads to new clinical options. Translating discoveries from the researcher's bench to the patient's bedside is the quickest and most effective way to impact cancer care. This translation happens on an ongoing basis at the BC Cancer Agency. It is what makes it an international leader in cancer research.

Our Partner

The BC Cancer Agency, an internationally recognized, province-wide cancer control organization

The BC Cancer Agency provides a province-wide, population-based cancer control program for everyone in BC and Yukon. It delivers the full spectrum of cancer care. World-class expertise is found across the BC Cancer Agency in various clinical programs and research platforms.

Our Donors

Are leading the way in helping us advance our cause

Because of our unique relationship with the BC Cancer Agency, we can directly connect donors to outcomes. We can show you a return on your investment and partnership right here in BC – discoveries made possible because of donor-supported research taking place at the BC Cancer Agency. You provide the funds that fuel research.



Yes, I want to become a Partner in Discovery

Enclosed is my gift to the BC Cancer Foundation for: \$50 \$100 \$250 Other Amount \$ _____

Monthly Giving Option: On the 1st or 15th of each month I would like to give \$ _____

I have enclosed a cheque marked "void" or provided my credit card information below.

Monthly donors can change or cancel their gift at any time by contacting the BC Cancer Foundation.

I have enclosed my cheque made payable to: BC Cancer Foundation

I prefer to use my credit card: VISA MasterCard Amex

Card Number: _____ Expiry Date (mm/yy): _____

Name on Card: _____ Signature: _____

Home Address: _____ City: _____

Province: _____ Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please send me *Partners in Discovery*, the BC Cancer Foundation's monthly e-newsletter, to my email address above.

I would like a free subscription to *Vim & Vigour*, the BC Cancer Foundation's quarterly magazine, sent to my mailing address above.

You can also donate online at www.bccancerfoundation.com

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bccancerfoundation.com

Charitable Business Number: 11881 8434 RR0001



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