

Advanced Breast Cancer



Living and Coping with the Disease

A Patient Checklist

Living With Advanced Breast Cancer

Women with breast cancer often say that one of the best ways to live life to the fullest is to become knowledgeable about the disease and the various support vehicles available. Some suggestions include

- **RESOURCES AND INFORMATION** – Ask questions. The more you know about the diagnosis, the better equipped you and your family will be to make informed decisions about treatment options and overall health. Books, pamphlets, videos, and Web sites can provide helpful information
- **SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE** – There are groups that offer support or counseling to patients and families. Often, hospitals (or your doctor's office) will have a list of organizations available. A social worker, counselor, or member of the clergy may also be a good resource. Ask family and friends to fill out paperwork, prepare meals, provide transportation, and keep track of appointments
- **DAILY REGIMEN** – Eat a nutritious diet. If you are having difficulty eating, it is important that you work with your physician to identify ways to maintain your strength and energy. You should get more sleep and nap during the day when tired. Inquire about activities that you should and should not be doing
- **DISEASE MANAGEMENT** – Keep accurate records of all treatments. A patient's medical history may determine how the condition will be treated in the future. You should be committed to your treatment; keep physician's appointments, and take medication when scheduled



Clinical Trials

Clinical trials are research studies that explain and evaluate new treatments and how they compare to commonly used cancer therapies. Clinical trials are the cornerstone of future advances in cancer therapies and help determine whether promising approaches to cancer prevention and treatment are safe and effective. It is important that women of all ages participate in clinical trials so that new and better treatments become available to breast cancer patients. You may want to consider asking your doctor if you are eligible to participate in a clinical trial.

For further information about available clinical trials, contact

- **National Cancer Institute** at 800-4-CANCER or www.cancer.gov
- **Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative Groups** at www.cancertrialshelp.org



What is Advanced Breast Cancer?

Once you have been diagnosed with advanced or metastatic breast cancer, it is important to understand the disease. Breast cancer is considered advanced when it has spread from its original site to distant areas of the body. The term *locally advanced* is used to describe breast cancers that have not spread outside the breast region, but that are large (greater than 2 inches) and/or have extended to involve the local skin or chest wall muscle or bone. Physicians will look at a number of factors to determine the stage of breast cancer, including tumor size, lymph node involvement, and whether the cancer has spread to other areas in the body.

Once the stage of the disease is determined, there are two different ways advanced breast cancer can be classified: locally advanced or metastatic.

- **Locally advanced** breast cancer indicates that the cancer is large (greater than 2 inches) or may have spread to other nearby tissue such as skin, underlying muscle, or chest wall, or there is extensive lymph node involvement. Locally advanced breast cancer is considered Stage III; if it is operable, it is referred to as Stage IIIA
- **Metastatic breast cancer** indicates that the cancer has spread from the breast and lymph nodes to other parts of the body such as bone, lung, liver, or brain

Adjusting to Changes in Life

Several questions about diagnosis, treatment options, and ways to battle chronic illness immediately arise when diagnosed with advanced breast cancer. It is important for you to decide what you want to know about your diagnosis, and how you want to discuss any new developments with your physician. You may find having information and talking to others are ways to help deal with this stressful change in life.

Being realistic about what you can and cannot physically do is also crucial to your life. In fact, many women will find that their personal priorities change and evolve as time goes on. Maintaining a daily routine will help you feel productive and gain perspective on your condition.

Coming to terms with the diagnosis takes time, and the process is different for everyone. Regardless of the diagnosis, living with advanced breast cancer is about leading a productive life.

Treatment Options



Today, women with advanced breast cancer have several treatment options available to them. Generally, these treatments are aimed at lengthening life, while considering quality and fullness of life. A medical team can help make the appropriate decisions about treatment and follow-up care, based on the medical condition and the lifestyle women want to lead.

You need to determine what treatment options will work for you by weighing the risks and benefits with your physician.

Some therapies that are available for women with locally advanced or metastatic breast cancer include

- **HORMONAL THERAPY:** A woman may have already received hormonal therapy after surgery at her initial diagnosis. Hormonal therapy can be used to reduce the growth, spread, and recurrence of breast cancer. If the cancer is found to be of the type that may be sensitive to estrogen, hormonal therapy may be able to keep estrogen from helping the cancer cells to grow and divide. The presence of estrogen or progesterone receptors (message-carrying protein that may stimulate tumor growth) in the cancerous tumor is the best way to predict a woman's response to hormonal therapy

There are several hormonal treatment options available for postmenopausal women with advanced or metastatic breast cancer that can be tailored to the lifestyle a woman wants to lead. Hormonal therapies are currently available in pill form or a once-a-month injection. Ask your physician about these therapies.

- **CHEMOTHERAPY:** Chemotherapy may be used if it is believed the breast cancer will not respond to hormonal therapy, or it has stopped responding to hormonal therapies. Chemotherapy is the use of drugs that target and destroy rapidly dividing cells, including cancer cells. It is frequently used in metastatic breast cancer and in locally advanced breast cancer to shrink the tumor and make it operable
- **BIOLOGICALLY TARGETED THERAPY:** This term covers a range of new options that are to be added to the family of cancer treatments. These therapies target specific features of cancer cells to fight cancer. Since these therapies are specific, they are intended to have less effect on normal cells, which may reduce the chance of side effects like those caused by current cancer treatments. Types of treatment include monoclonal antibodies, which bind to proteins on the cancer cell surface to slow down cancer cell growth; angiogenesis inhibitors, which are intended to prevent the growth of new blood vessels and so cut off the supply of oxygen and nutrients to cancer cells; and signal transduction inhibitors, which block the signals inside the cancer cell that promote the cells to divide and, in turn, cause the cancer to grow

Most of these approaches are still experimental and would be offered as part of a clinical trial.

- **RADIATION THERAPY:** Radiation therapy uses penetrating beams of high-energy waves or streams of particles to kill and hinder the growth of cancer cells. In metastatic disease, radiation is most commonly used to treat symptoms in breast cancer that has spread to the bone
- **SURGERY:** Surgery permits both diagnostic tissue removal and may help with the control of cancer. In some cases, a physician may recommend surgery to remove tissue from the breast or lymph node

Questions To Ask Your Physician

Learning about the diagnosis and treatment options available may help you to make decisions about your care. The first step in the learning process begins with talking to your physician. Every woman's breast cancer diagnosis is different. What a physician recommends for one woman may not be right for another. Developing a list of questions to ask is a good first start to addressing concerns and getting information.

Here is a list of basic questions on advanced breast cancer to get the conversation started.

ABOUT ADVANCED BREAST CANCER

- What stage is my breast cancer? What does this mean?
- Why has my breast cancer recurred? Does this mean my treatment will have to change?
- What are my chances of responding to treatment?

TREATMENT OPTIONS

- What are the treatment options for my stage of breast cancer? Would these treatments help me? Why or why not?
__Surgery __Radiation __Chemotherapy
__ Hormonal therapy __Biologically targeted therapy
__ Clinical trial participation
- What treatment options, oral or injectable, are available for me as an advanced breast cancer patient?
- What treatment do you feel will work best for me? Why are you recommending this treatment?
- What are the possible side effects of this treatment? Will it make me feel sick? What kinds of food will help me? Where can I get advice on meal planning?
- Will this treatment allow me to continue to be involved in my normal daily activities? If not, would another treatment be better for me so I can remain active?
- Will the treatment affect my family? What do they need to know?

Questions To Ask Your Physician

continued from other side

- Will the treatment affect my appearance? If so, are there other options that will not change the way that I look?
- What if my current therapy does not continue to benefit me? Are there any other options?
- What types of hormonal therapies are available to me? Will it be beneficial? Is there any treatment I could be prescribed that does not have to be taken daily?
- What are the latest advances in hormonal therapies?
- How often will I be able to see my health care professional?

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- What studies are currently under way for women with advanced breast cancer?
- Do you recommend a clinical trial for me? How can it help?
- Where can I get further information on advanced breast cancer?
- Where can I find additional support?

NOTES

For more information or resources,
please visit www.astrazeneca-us.com.



AstraZeneca Celebrates 30 Years of Commitment to Breast Cancer Innovation and Treatment

Scientists at AstraZeneca have researched and developed a wide range of products that have made significant contributions to the fight against breast cancer around the world. The AstraZeneca long heritage of commitment, innovation, and ability to develop new concepts in medicine has made it one of the premier pharmaceutical companies in the world.

For more information about AstraZeneca, please visit www.astrazeneca-us.com.