

Patient Advocate Corner

Y-ME Empowers Those Living With Breast Cancer



Margaret C. Kirk

By Margaret C. Kirk

“You have breast cancer.” These are among the most frightening words a patient can hear a doctor utter. Yet in the United States more than 214,000 women and men hear them each year.

Just those words can turn someone’s world upside down and leave that person feeling alone, afraid, and hopeless.

However, having information and

knowing where to turn for support can help a patient regain a sense of hope and control. Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization is there, 24/7, to educate and support those living with breast cancer.

Y-ME, a network of patients helping patients, understands the value of peer support—talking to someone other than family or friends and learning from someone who has also heard those devastating words, “You have breast cancer.”

Y-ME Programs for Patients and Their Loved Ones

Y-ME offers a variety of services so patients can choose the type of support best for them. Some programs are based on one-on-one peer support, such as Y-ME’s 24/7 hotline, while the *ShareRing Network* is an at-home group activity. In addition, Y-ME publishes informative materials, such as the quarterly newsletter *Lifeline*. All programs are free of charge and confidential.

- **The 24-hour Y-ME National Breast Cancer Hotline** is the organization’s premier resource and the country’s only free-of-charge, 24/7 hotline operated by trained peer counselors who are breast cancer survivors, with interpreters in 150 languages.
- **Match programs** are available for patients with specific diagnoses and concerns. They are also offered for loved ones and partners supporting someone who has breast cancer.
- **Y-ME publications** include quarterly newsletter *Lifeline*, pamphlet *Latina News*, and monthly e-mail newsletter *Peer to Peer*.
- **Brochures** about breast cancer offer patient-friendly information, including *Every Woman’s Guide to Breast Cancer*, *Understanding Your Breast Cancer Pathology Report: A Guide for Breast Cancer Patients*, *Is a Clinical Trial Right for You?*, *Partial Breast Irradiation: A Shorter Path to Breast Cancer Radiation Therapy*, *I Still Buy Green Bananas* (for women with metastatic disease), *When the*

Woman You Love Has Breast Cancer, and *A Woman’s Guide to Breast Care* (available in multiple languages).

- **Outreach programs** target underserved communities: A Day for You is dedicated to increasing awareness and earlier detection in underserved communities. Friends of Ann & Mimi helps women navigate the complexities of the health care system.
- **Wig and prosthesis bank** is available for those with limited resources.
- **ShareRing Network** offers free monthly teleconferences and small-group discussions with medical professionals.
- **Y-ME Advocacy** aims to influence legislation and increase awareness, research, and treatment options for breast cancer.
- **Affiliates** throughout the nation provide services, such as support groups, breast health awareness workshops, wigs and prostheses for women with limited resources, and advocacy in their communities.
- **Y-ME’s Web site** (www.y-me.org) offers content in seven languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Tagalog, and Vietnamese) that covers basic breast cancer information, treatment options, adverse effects, advice on coping and quality of life, and helpful tips on asking doctors questions and talking with family and friends about a diagnosis.

Y-ME’s 24/7 Hotline With Interpreters in 150 Languages

“Am I going to die?” “My wife was just diagnosed with breast cancer. What do we do?” “How can I make decisions about my treatment when I’m so upset?” These are common questions among the 40,000 calls the Y-ME National Breast Cancer Hotline receives each year. Y-ME’s trained and certified peer counselors are all breast cancer survivors and help callers by giving emotional support and information about breast cancer procedures and treatment options.

The Y-ME hotline does not endorse specific treatment options or protocols or give medical advice, but peer counselors can replace fear with facts and help patients understand how to weigh their options to personalize their treatment. Peer counselors also coach callers on how to communicate effectively with their doctors, and they encourage callers to be the key players on their health care teams.

For breast cancer support or information, including publications and newsletters, visit www.y-me.org or call the Y-ME National Breast Cancer Hotline at 800-221-2141 (English, with interpreters in 150 languages) or 800-986-9505 (Spanish).

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