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http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/breast-cancer-men/follow-care-and-monitoring

Breast Cancer in Men - Follow-Up Care and Monitoring [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [2], 11/2015

ON THIS PAGE: You will read about your medical care after cancer treatment is completed, and why this follow-up care is important. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

Care for people diagnosed with cancer doesn't end when active treatment has finished. Your health care team will continue to check to make sure the cancer has not returned, manage any side effects, and monitor your overall health. This is called follow-up care.

This plan may include regular physical examinations and/or medical tests to monitor your recovery for the coming months and years. Although continued breast screening by mammography is important for women after breast cancer, the role of screening mammograms in men after breast cancer is not well understood and men should discuss this with their doctors. In some instances, patients may be able to visit survivorship clinics that specialize in the post-treatment needs of people diagnosed with breast cancer. ASCO offers its full recommendations for follow-up care for breast cancer survivors in a separate article here [3].

Learn more about the importance of follow-up care [4].

Watching for recurrence

One goal of follow-up care is to check for a recurrence. Cancer recurs because small areas of cancer cells may remain undetected in the body. Over time, these cells may increase in number until they show up on test results or cause signs or symptoms.

During follow-up care, a doctor familiar with your medical history can give you personalized information about your risk of recurrence. Understanding your risk of recurrence and the treatment options may help you feel more prepared if the cancer does return, and will help you make decisions about your treatment. Learn more about coping with the fear of recurrence [5].

Breast cancer can come back in the breast or other areas of the body. Generally, a recurrence is found when a person has symptoms or an abnormal finding on physical examination. The symptoms depend on where the cancer has recurred and may include:

- A lump under the arm or along the chest wall
- Bone pain or fractures
- Headaches or seizures
- Chronic coughing or trouble breathing
- Abdominal pain or a yellowing of the skin and eyes called jaundice
- Extreme tiredness
- Feeling generally unwell

Your doctor will also ask specific questions about your health. Some people may have blood tests or imaging tests as part of regular follow-up care, but testing recommendations depend on several factors including the type and stage of cancer originally diagnosed and the types of treatment given.

Managing long-term and late side effects

Most people expect to experience side effects when receiving treatment. However, it is often surprising to survivors that some side effects may linger beyond the treatment period. These are called long-term side effects. In addition, other side effects called late effects may develop months or even years afterwards. Long-term and late effects can include both physical and emotional changes.

Talk with your doctor about your risk of developing such side effects based on the type of cancer, your individual treatment plan, and your overall health. If you had a treatment known to

cause specific late effects, you may also have certain physical examinations, scans, or blood tests to help find and manage them.

- **Long-term effects of surgery.** After surgery for treat breast cancer, the chest may be scarred and may have a different appearance than before surgery. If lymph nodes were removed as part of the surgery or affected during treatment, lymphedema may occur, even many years after treatment, and this is a life-long risk for survivors.

- **Long-term effects of radiation therapy.** Some patients experience breathlessness, a dry cough, and/or chest pain 2 to 3 months after finishing radiation therapy because the treatment can cause swelling and a hardening or thickening of the lungs called fibrosis. These symptoms may seem similar to the symptoms of pneumonia but do not go away with antibiotics. The symptoms can be treated with medications called steroids. Most patients fully recover with treatment. Talk with your doctor if you develop any new symptoms after radiation therapy or if the side effects are not going away.

- **Long-term effects of trastuzumab and/or chemotherapy.** Patients who received trastuzumab or certain types of chemotherapy called anthracyclines may be at risk of heart problems. Talk with your doctor about the best ways to check for heart problems.

In addition, men and women recovering from breast cancer have other side effects that may continue after treatment. Learn about ways of coping with cancer-related fatigue [6], a drop in cognitive function that is sometimes called "chemobrain", and other late effects [7] of cancer treatment.

Keeping personal health records

You and your doctor should work together to develop a personalized follow-up care plan. Be sure to ask about any concerns you have about your future physical or emotional health. ASCO offers forms to help create a treatment summary to keep track of the cancer treatment you received and develop a survivorship care plan [8] once treatment is completed.

This is also a good time to decide who will lead your follow-up care. Some survivors continue to see their oncologist, while others transition back to the general care of their family doctor or another health care professional. This decision depends on several factors, including the type and stage of cancer, side effects, health insurance rules, and your personal preferences.

If a doctor who was not directly involved in your cancer care will lead your follow-up care, be sure to share your cancer treatment summary and survivorship care plan forms with him or her, as well as all future health care providers. Details about your cancer treatment are very valuable to the health care professionals who will care for you throughout your lifetime.

The next section in this guide is Survivorship [9] and it describes how to cope with challenges in everyday life after a cancer diagnosis. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

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