

One step at a time:
**THE PATHWAY THROUGH
BREAST CANCER.**

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In Canada, the 5 year survival rate for breast cancer is 88%.

Source: Canadian Cancer Society's Advisory Committee on Cancer Statistics. Canadian Cancer Statistics 2015. Toronto, ON: Canadian Cancer Society; 2015.

Helpful Tips

- Bring a family member or friend to appointments. They can help you remember what was discussed and give you support.
- Make notes. Write down what you are thinking and information you have been given.
- Write down your questions and bring them to your appointments.
- You can ask for a copy of reports from your tests or procedures from Medical Records.
- Reach out to family and friends for emotional support. If you want to talk to a professional, you can call Community Mental Health in your area or talk to your family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- You may want to share what you and your surgeon have talked about with your family doctor or nurse practitioner.

YOUR PATHWAY THROUGH BREAST CANCER

This booklet will provide you with step-by-step information on what to expect during your breast cancer experience. We suggest you read the whole booklet early on so that you will be ready to make decisions along the way.

Pre-Diagnosis

Just as there are no two people who have the same breast cancer experience, your treatment plan will be as individual as you are. Your abnormal mammogram and biopsy provide valuable information to your doctors. A pathology report from your biopsy provides the first information about the type of breast cancer you have. The pre-diagnosis phase from your abnormal mammogram to getting a pathology report from the biopsy could take up to two months.

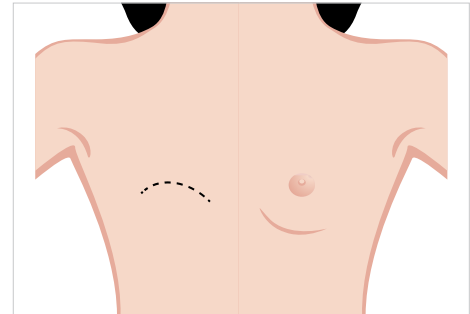
We know this can be a very difficult time for you and your family. We encourage you to use this booklet and the helpful resources listed to support you along the way.

STEP 1. IF YOU ARE HAVING SURGERY

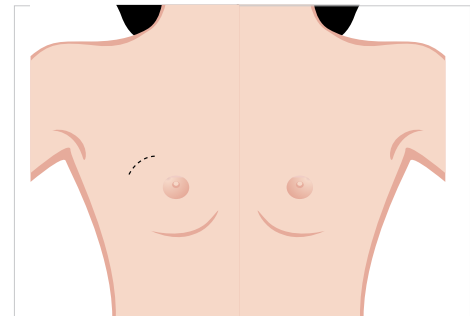
If you are having surgery, your first step will be meeting with your surgeon to plan your surgery. Your surgeon will look at your biopsy report, pathology report and the results of any other tests. Your surgeon will also look at images of the size and location of your cancer. You and your surgeon will use this information to decide on the best surgery treatment for you.

There are two types of surgery for breast cancer. A **mastectomy** is the removal of the whole breast. A **lumpectomy** is the removal of the cancer tumour and some of the healthy tissue around it. You may also need surgery to remove lymph nodes from your armpit. Your surgeon will explain why and how this is done.

Start learning about your type of breast cancer and your surgery options. Your surgery decision may affect your treatment choices later and can impact other parts of your life. Learn everything you can about surgery options and then decide what is right for you. If you will be having a mastectomy, a conversation with your surgeon about breast reconstruction can be done at this time. It is your right to ask for a second opinion about surgery if you would like.



mastectomy



lumpectomy



Breast reconstruction surgery

If you are considering breast reconstruction surgery, you will be referred to a plastic surgeon. You and the surgeon will decide if you are a good candidate for breast reconstruction, what type of surgery you will have and when. You will need to consider the effects of another surgery and recovery as well as your expectations of how your new breast will look and feel. For cancer patients, breast reconstruction surgery is free; however, you will need to be financially prepared to be off work for surgery and recovery.

Pre-surgery appointment

The hospital will contact you about a pre-surgery appointment. It is important for you to bring all of your medications in their original bottles to this appointment. During this appointment, you will receive information handouts about your surgery and contact information that you may need after surgery.

You may want to share questions with your family doctor or nurse practitioner and to share what the surgeon has discussed with you.

Questions to ask your surgeon

- What type of cancer do I have?
- What choices do I have for surgery?
- How long will I have to wait for surgery?
- Where will my surgery take place?
- Will I go home the day of surgery or stay overnight?
- How long will I be off work?
- What will my recovery involve?
- How will this affect my daily life (pain, movement at work, etc)?
- Is breast reconstruction an option for me?
- Will breast reconstruction change my surgery?
- How do I get a second opinion if I want one?
- Do I need more tests?



FROM BIOPSY TO VISIT WITH SURGEON: UP TO 3 WEEKS.

STEP 2. YOUR SURGERY

Before your surgery, your surgeon and anesthetist will speak with you and answer any questions you may have. You may need to go to the x-ray department (Diagnostic Imaging) for a dye injection or wire localization, if ordered by your surgeon. After your surgery, you will be given an information booklet called A Patient's Guide to Lumpectomy and Mastectomy. This booklet will tell you about care for your incision, exercise, diet, medication and drain care (if needed).

If you have had lymph nodes removed during surgery you could be at risk of developing swelling and inflammation in your arm. To prevent swelling and inflammation do the recommended exercises as part of your daily routine. Through various treatment options, the Lymphedema Management Program will help control swelling and other problems caused by lymphedema, helping patients to continue activities of daily living. You may receive a visit from the Cancer Patient Navigator while you are in the hospital. They can help you and your family understand the many challenges you may face and questions you may have about your journey.

You can contact the Cancer Patient Navigator at 1-877-511-5177.

Questions to ask your surgeon

- What did the surgeon do?
- Did the surgeon get all of the cancer?
- When will I get my pathology report?
- Who will explain the results to me?
- If I have questions later, who can I ask?
- How will the course of my treatment be determined?
- Who will be involved in my treatment?
- What services such as counselling, homecare or physiotherapy are available to me?
- Will the surgeon provide me with a referral for these services?



What is a pathology report?

A pathology report provides information about your type of cancer. The tissue removed during biopsy and surgery is examined under a microscope and the results will be written in your pathology report. More tests may be ordered by your surgeon or cancer doctor to better understand your cancer.

Your surgeon will review your pathology report with you. This report may tell you the stage of your cancer and help to plan for the rest of your treatment. After your surgeon has reviewed your pathology report they may refer you to a cancer doctor if they feel more treatment is needed.



Questions to ask about your report

- What type of cancer do I have?
- What stage of cancer do I have?
- How many lymph nodes were removed?
- How many lymph nodes were positive?
- What other tests will I need?
- When will I see a cancer doctor?
- How will the cancer doctor decide on my treatment?
- Who else will be involved in my treatment?



STEP 3. MEETING YOUR ONCOLOGIST

A cancer doctor, referred to as an oncologist, at the PEI Cancer Treatment Centre will review your referral and recommend which treatments they think will be best for you. You will receive notice of an appointment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital or Prince County Hospital to meet with your oncologist. Bring family or a friend who you trust to your appointment with the cancer doctor. Ask them to take notes so you can look at them later to help remember all of the details.

On the day of your first visit, it is important to bring all of your medications in the original bottles to your appointment.

You will be asked to complete some paperwork asking questions about your past medical history and the level of distress you may have about your health and well-being (Screening for Distress). Cancer can be stressful. It can affect more than just your body. It can affect your emotions, your work, your finances and your relationships with family and friends. Many people experience distress during their cancer journey.

Questions to ask your oncologist

- What type of treatment will I need?
- When will my treatment start?
- How long will it last?
- What are the side effects? Will I lose my hair?
- What would happen if I do not have treatment?
- Where can I have my cancer treatment?
- Are my family members at risk of developing cancer?
- Should they be tested?
- Who do I call on the weekend or evening?
- How will my treatment be affected by holidays?
- Do I need more tests?



Your cancer team would like to know how you are feeling and coping with your cancer. By answering these questions honestly, they can better support you throughout your breast cancer journey. The cancer nurse will review information with you and provide any needed education, direction and support.

The cancer doctor will talk to you about your treatment options. Ask questions to be sure you understand the benefits and side effects of each treatment. It is helpful to prepare your questions before this visit. After the first meeting, you and your cancer doctor will decide on your treatment plan and a schedule will be created (Step 4).

A clinical trial may be suggested by your doctor. Clinical trials are conducted to see if a new cancer treatment works as good as, or more effectively than, a current cancer treatment. By becoming enrolled in a clinical trial, you have the opportunity to contribute to research which may improve cancer care.

You can reach the PEI Cancer Treatment Centre Clinical Trials Nurse at 902-894-2027.



FROM REVIEW OF YOUR PATHOLOGY REPORT TO VISIT WITH ONCOLOGIST: ABOUT 2-4 WEEKS.

44%

Breast cancer deaths have decreased by 44 percent since the peak in 1986 due to earlier detection through regular mammography screening, advances in screening technology and improved treatments.

Source: Canadian Cancer Society's Advisory Committee on Cancer Statistics. Canadian Cancer Statistics 2015. Toronto, ON: Canadian Cancer Society; 2015.

STEP 4. TREATMENT OPTIONS

Additional treatment is often given after your surgery to help prevent your cancer from coming back. This preventative treatment is called an Adjuvant Therapy. Your oncologist will explain what types of treatment you can have, what that means and what possible side effects could happen. Depending on your type of cancer and the surgery you had, you may need one or more of the following treatments.

Radiation therapy uses high energy x-ray to destroy cancer cells. During your treatments a machine rotates around you, but you will not feel anything. A booklet by the Canadian Cancer Society called Radiation Therapy: A guide for people with cancer will be given to you for more information.

Anti-cancer drugs can have many names including chemotherapy, hormonal therapy and targeted therapy. These drugs can be taken as a pill, injection or by IV. A teaching package will be given to you when you meet with a cancer nurse. This package includes a booklet made by the Canadian Cancer Society called Chemotherapy and other Drug Therapies: A guide for people with cancer. You will also have an education appointment with the cancer nurse at the Cancer Treatment Centre or Prince County Hospital.

Questions to ask about your treatment

- What supports do I have?
- When will I know if my treatment worked?
- Will I have to pay for my treatment?
- How will the treatment affect my life?
(How will it affect my work, taking care of myself, social activities, quality of life and fertility/reproduction?)
- Can I continue my physiotherapy?

Stay connected to your family doctor or nurse practitioner when you have a health need that is not related to your cancer treatment.



FROM MEETING YOUR ONCOLOGIST TO STARTING YOUR TREATMENT
COULD BE 1 TO 4 WEEKS DEPENDING ON YOUR TREATMENT PLAN.



STEP 5. APPROACHING THE END OF TREATMENT

As you near the end of your treatment you may start to feel mixed emotions. Knowing what is ahead can help minimize those feelings. Once you have completed your treatments, make sure you know what side effects are expected and know how you can manage them both physically and emotionally.

Make sure you discuss your follow up care plans with your cancer doctor.

The Moving Forward Program was created to help people feel confident about moving on with their lives. This program provides educational sessions about healthy choices, coping, being proactive and follow up care. For more information about this program you can contact the Cancer Patient Navigator.

You can contact the Cancer Patient Navigator toll-free at 1-877-511-5177.



TO THE END OF YOUR TREATMENT IS AS INDIVIDUAL AS YOU ARE AND IS BASED ON YOUR TREATMENT PLAN.

Questions to ask when finishing treatment

- Will I come back to the cancer centre and how often?
- What cancer screening is right for me?
- Which health care professional will I have these appointments with?
- What other services, such as counselling, physiotherapy will I have appointments with?
- What tests will I have and how often?
- Who will book these appointments and tests?
- How do I check my breasts going forward and when should I check?
- What can my family do to prevent breast cancer?
- Should my family members be screened for breast cancer?
- Who do I follow up with if I'm not feeling good?
- What symptoms should I worry about?
- Do I need to visit my oncologist again?



TAKING CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH:

- Pay attention to physical and emotional changes
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Get regular exercise
- Join an exercise group that you enjoy
- Limit alcohol and do not smoke
- Wear sunscreen
- Be proactive with your health and health information

YOU CAN DO THIS.

This project is funded by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation in partnership with Health PEI.



HELPFUL CONTACTS

**PEI Cancer Treatment Centre:
902-894-2027**

**Cancer Patient Navigator:
toll free 1-877-511-5177**

**Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation
Patient Support & Information:
toll-free 1-888-778-3100**

**Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation:
toll free 1-866-273-2223**

**PEI Breast Cancer Information
Partnership: www.peibcip.ca**

**Canadian Cancer Society's
Cancer Information Services:
toll free 1-888-939-3333**

**Canadian Cancer Society PEI:
toll free 1-866-566-4007**

SUGGESTED WEBSITES

www.healthpei.ca/cancercare

www.cbcf.org

www.willow.org

www.bra-day.com/breast-reconstruction

www.cancer.ca

www.smokershelpline.ca

www.gopei.ca