

Making Treatment Decisions

Choosing the best treatment for you

When evaluating different treatments, the best treatment for your cancer should always be your first concern. However, there are other things to consider, too. Before making your final decision, ask yourself these questions:

- **Will I have to travel to receive treatment?**
Depending on where you live, you may have to travel to another city to receive treatment. Some treatments will require you to travel more often than others. If your treatment will require you to travel more, you may want to consider moving closer to your treatment center. The hospital social worker can help you find a temporary place to live while you are in treatment.
- **Do I have the chance to participate in a clinical trial?**
In a clinical trial, you have the chance to be one of the first persons to try a new breast cancer treatment. You may also contribute to research that could someday help other people. On the other hand, a new treatment may not be more effective than standard treatments. Ask your doctor about the pros and cons for you.
- **What kind of social support do I have?**
Do you have someone to drive you to and from treatment? Is someone able to stay at home with you while you recover? Some kinds of treatment may require more support than others.



Only you can decide which treatment best fits your life.

Treatment decision tool

Oncotype Dx is a new test that helps predict the chance of recurrence in certain types of breast cancers. It is being used in the clinic today in a limited and select way. This test is also being used in clinical trials to learn more about how to make treatment decisions. The test looks at a sample of the tumor for the presence of specific genes. Along with other factors, a health care provider can sometimes use the results of the Oncotype Dx test to better tailor treatment plans. If the test shows a person has a high risk of recurrence, a more aggressive treatment of chemotherapy in addition to hormonal therapy may be recommended. If the test shows a low risk of recurrence, the use of hormonal therapy alone could be considered.

Did you know?

Certain types of breast cancer treatments are more common in some regions of the country than in others. For example, mastectomy is more common in the South and the Southwest, while lumpectomies are more common in the Northeast, West and Midwest. This happens because doctors tend to recommend the treatment with which they are most familiar. Be aware of these trends and discuss them with your doctor.

The cost of breast cancer

Question:

I just found out that I have breast cancer. My doctor told me that treatment will take several months. Could I lose my job? How will I pay for treatment?

Answer:

It is against the law for your employer to fire you because you have breast cancer. Your job may be protected under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, which allows you to take 12 weeks off work without pay and keep any health insurance benefits your job offers. It also allows you to keep your old job (or a job with equal pay, status and benefits) when you return. To find out if the Family and Medical Leave Act applies to you, call the Women's Bureau in the U.S. Department of Labor at 1-800-827-5335. Most women who undergo therapy for early breast cancer are able to continue working.

If you already have health insurance, review your policy. Look for any gaps and limitations in coverage. You may want to ask a lawyer to help you do this. Make sure you do everything you need to do to keep your policy active, including paying your monthly premiums. If you are getting a new policy, do not cancel the old one until the new one is in effect and waiting periods for pre-existing conditions are over. After you decide on a treatment and submit claims to your insurance company, keep good records. Photocopy all your claims and take detailed notes any time you talk to your insurance company, including the date, time, the person's name and what you discussed. If you do not already have health insurance, it may be difficult to get. Call your hospital and ask to speak with a social worker. Describe your situation and ask for advice. You can also call the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship at 1-877-NCCS-YES (1-877-622-7937) for information about getting health insurance after a cancer diagnosis.

The Co-Pay Relief (CPR) Program provides direct copayment assistance for pharmaceutical products to insured Americans who qualify. For more information, call 1-866-512-3861 or visit www.copays.org.

Linking A.R.M.S.[™] offers limited financial assistance for hormonal and oral chemotherapy, pain and anti-nausea medication, lymphedema supplies and durable medical equipment. This program is funded in partnership with Susan G. Komen for the Cure[®].

Resources

Organizations

Susan G. Komen for the Cure[®]
1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)
www.komen.org

CancerCare, Linking A.R.M.S.
1-800-813-4673
www.cancer.org

National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service
1-800-4-CANCER
www.cancer.gov

The Patient Advocate Foundation, Co-Pay
www.copays.org

Related fact sheets in this series:

- Breast Reconstruction & Prosthesis
- Chemotherapy — Coping With Side Effects
- Complementary Therapies
- Lymphedema
- Radiation Therapy — Coping With Side Effects
- Treatment Choices — An Overview