

Breast Cancer: Support for Metastatic Cancer



After a diagnosis of metastatic breast cancer, you may feel scared and overwhelmed. Know that you're not alone. A community of people is available to share advice, knowledge, and resources.

Finding support

You can get help in many ways.

Healthcare providers

- Talk with your providers, including your oncologist. They know your situation better than anyone. They can advise support, counseling, and resources specific to you.
- Your hospital may have a social worker, navigator, or case manager you can meet with. They can answer questions about your treatment. They can also connect you to hospital resources for treatment and counseling. Plus, they can discuss or point you to financial resources.

Support groups

- A support group connects you to people in a similar situation. It gives you a safe space to share your thoughts and concerns. You can also get information and tips from others. You can find both in-person or online groups through your local hospital, cancer center, and other cancer organizations.

Online communities

- There are online forums where people can share their experiences with metastatic breast cancer. Joining message boards and social media groups can make you feel less alone. This option works well for people who don't feel comfortable speaking in public or can't get to in-person support groups.

Nonprofit organizations

- Many nonprofit cancer organizations help people with cancer. Some may also provide financial assistance under certain conditions. Your healthcare team can suggest options. Or you can search online for the right fit.

Therapy and counseling

- It can also be helpful to get professional help. There are mental health professionals who specialize in cancer-related counseling. But you can also talk with a personal therapist or counselor. Hospitals and cancer centers may provide these services. You can also see someone privately. Counseling options include in-person, phone, or online sessions. The most important thing is to find a way to talk that's comfortable for you.

Palliative care

- Palliative care focuses on making the person more comfortable physically, emotionally, and spiritually at any point during a serious illness like advanced cancer. It may help ease pain and other distressing symptoms. It can improve quality of life. It's also been shown to decrease anxiety and depression. Palliative care and resources may be available in the hospital, clinic, or at home. It can also be offered at nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Hospice care

- Hospice care may help when treatment for cancer is no longer the focus of care. It can offer comfort, resources, and support for end-of-life situations. Hospice care can occur at home, in hospitals, at a hospice residential facility, or assisted living and nursing home facilities depending on your needs.

Communicating your needs

It may feel hard or awkward telling your friends and family how to help. That's normal. But it's important to clearly express yourself openly and honestly. Sharing your diagnosis and treatment plan will allow your loved ones to understand your situation. They may want to help but don't know how. Identify specific areas where they can step in to make your life easier, like cooking meals, running errands, driving you to an appointment, or taking care of your children.

You may set boundaries with each person. That way they'll have a clear idea of what you want (and what you don't). It's OK to ask for space or be alone when you need it.

It may be helpful to share your fears and emotions with those closest to you when you're ready. You may be feeling anxious, sad, angry, or hopeless, for example. Talking about how you feel could help you deal with your feelings.

If all the offers of help and support are overwhelming, it may be a good idea to pick someone as your point person. They can communicate and coordinate your needs with others for you.

Your needs will likely change as you continue through your treatment and when treatment ends. Let your loved ones know when that happens. Remember, you're not alone during this time. You can be connected to the support you need.

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