

Male Breast Cancer: Tests After Diagnosis



After going through a breast cancer diagnosis, you might feel like you've had your fill of tests and exams. But for many men, you will likely need more tests. These help your healthcare providers learn more about the cancer. They can help show if it has grown into nearby areas or spread to other parts of your body. The test results help your healthcare providers decide the best ways to treat the cancer. If you have any questions about these or other tests, talk with your healthcare team.

Imaging tests

Your provider will walk you through which of these imaging tests you may need. They may include:

- **Chest X-ray.** An X-ray gives your healthcare team a picture of the bones and organs in your chest. It may be used to see if breast cancer has spread to your lungs.
- **CT scan.** This scan is like having a 360-degree view of your body, with X-rays taken from all different angles. A computer combines the X-rays to create cross-sectional images of bones, blood vessels, and soft tissues. Sometimes contrast dye is used to make the organs and tissues clearer. A CT scan may be used to see if breast cancer has spread to other organs in your chest and belly (abdomen).
- **MRI scan.** This test uses radio waves and strong magnets to create detailed images. It can be helpful to look at your brain or spinal cord. MRI may also be used to create more detailed images of your breast than a mammogram can.
- **Bone scan.** For this test, a small amount of radioactive material is injected into your blood. It will show if and where in your bones there is cancer. It can help see if cancer has spread to your bones.
- **Positron emission tomography (PET) scan.** Much like a bone scan, a PET scan uses a small dose of radioactive sugar injected into a vein. Cancer cells absorb high amounts of the sugar. A special camera can show where the sugar collects in your body. This can show where the cancer has spread.

Lab tests on biopsy tissue

Lab tests will be done on the sample of cells that was taken during your breast biopsy. From these tests, your healthcare provider will learn if the tumor needs certain hormones to grow. Tumors that need hormones to grow are called hormone-receptor positive (HR+). This is because they have receptors for either estrogen (ER+) or progesterone (PR+).

Another test is done on the biopsy sample to see if the cancer cells make too much of the growth-promoting protein called the human epidermal growth factor receptor 2, or HER2. Tumors that make a lot of this protein are known as HER2-positive and tend to grow more quickly. Treatments that target HER2 can be used for these cancers.

Getting your test results

Your healthcare provider will talk with you about which tests you'll have. Make sure to get ready for the tests as directed. Ask questions and talk about any concerns you have.

Understandably, more tests can feel daunting. Know that each test brings you a step closer to a treatment plan designed just for you.

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