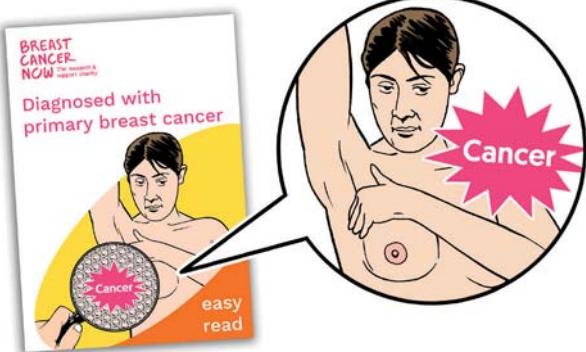


# Diagnosed with primary breast cancer



easy  
read

# Introduction



This booklet is about being **diagnosed** with primary breast cancer and deciding on what treatment is best for you.



Being **diagnosed** means finding out if you have an illness or not.



In this booklet we will talk about **your treatment team**.



This is because it is best to treat breast cancer with a team of doctors and health care professionals that have different skills and knowledge.

# Where to find more information



You can find more information on treatments and side effects in our other booklets.



These may not be in easy read, and you may need support to read them.

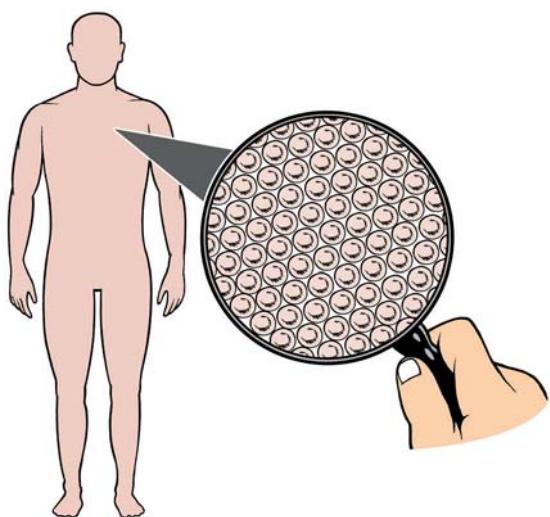


Or on our website  
[breastcancernow.org](http://breastcancernow.org)

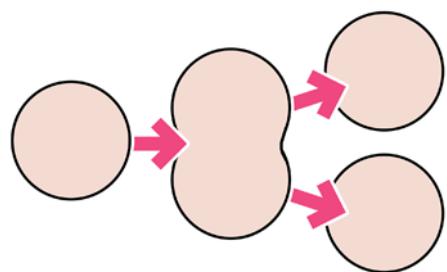


You can also call our helpline and speak to our breast care nurses on **0808 800 6000**

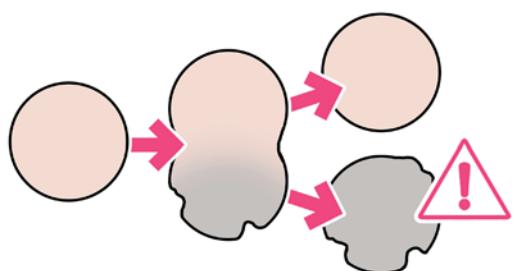
# What is breast cancer?



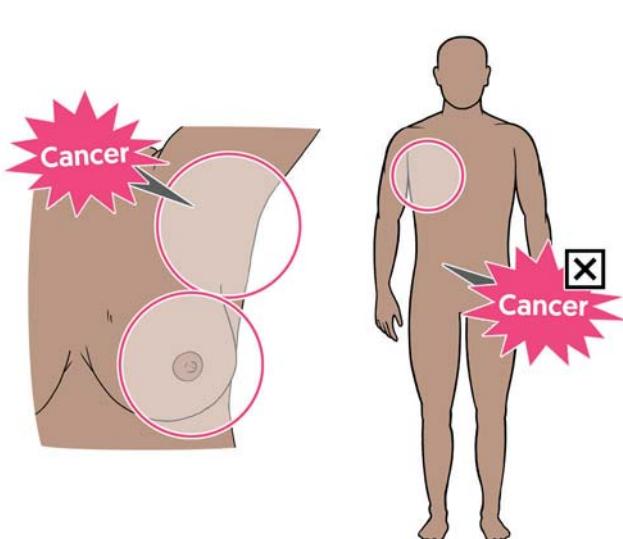
Your body is made up of very small cells.



It is normal for cells to split and grow.

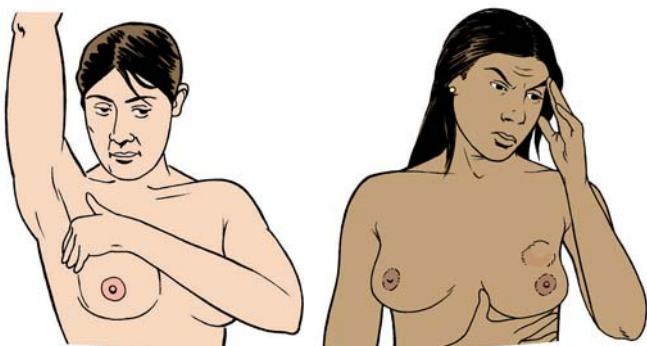
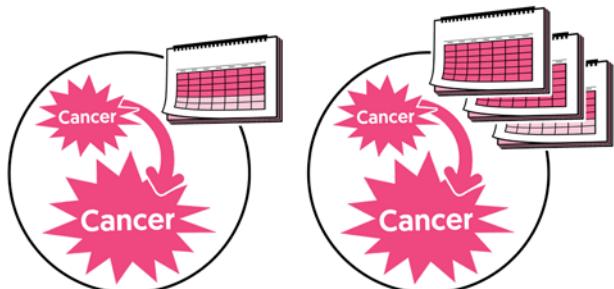
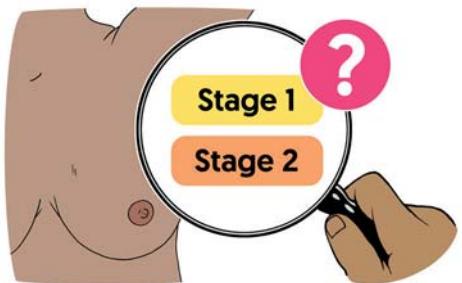


Breast cancer starts when cells in the breast begin to split and grow in a way they are not supposed to.



Primary breast cancer is breast cancer that has not spread beyond the breast or under the arm.

# Types of primary breast cancer

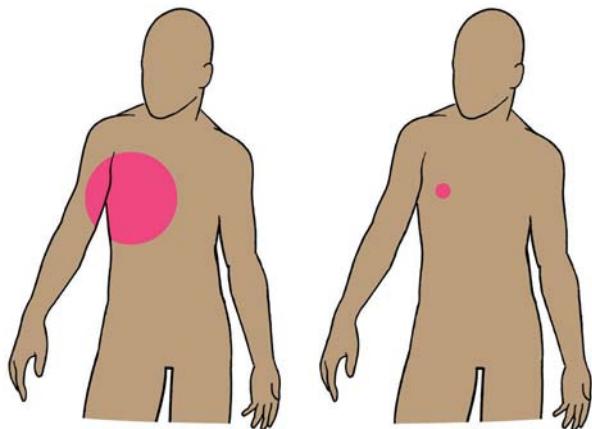


There are different types of breast cancer.

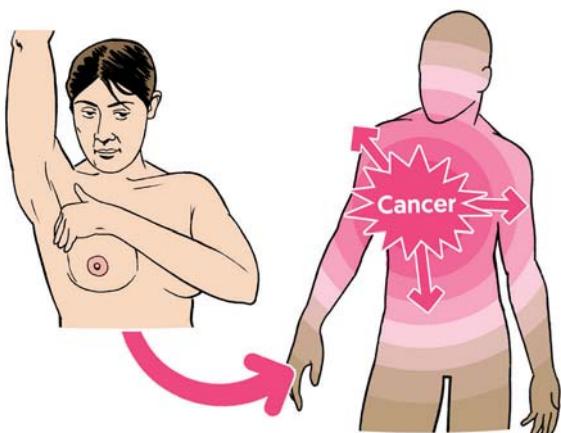
Breast cancer can:

- Be found at different stages
- Grow at different speeds
- Grow differently in different people

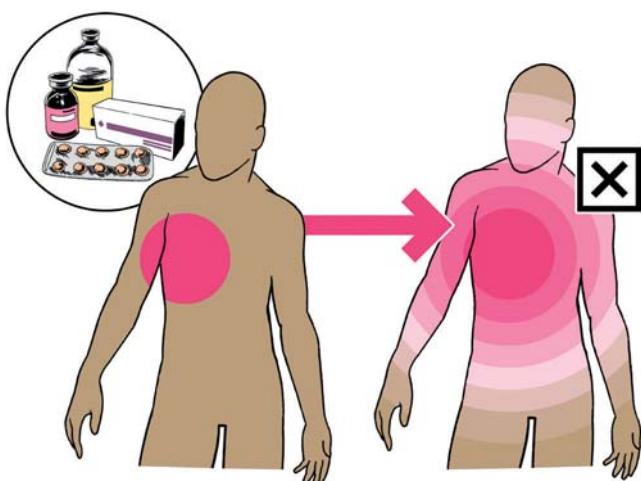
This means that different people will have different treatments.



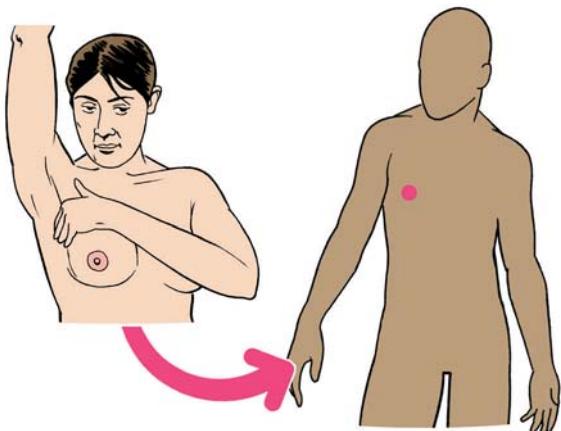
Breast cancer can be **invasive** or **non-invasive**. Non-invasive can also be called *in situ*.



**Invasive breast cancer** can spread to other parts of the body. Most breast cancers are invasive.



This does not mean the cancer has or will spread, just that it can. Treatments try to stop the cancer from spreading.



**Non-invasive breast cancer** can not spread to other parts of the body.

# Being diagnosed and your feelings

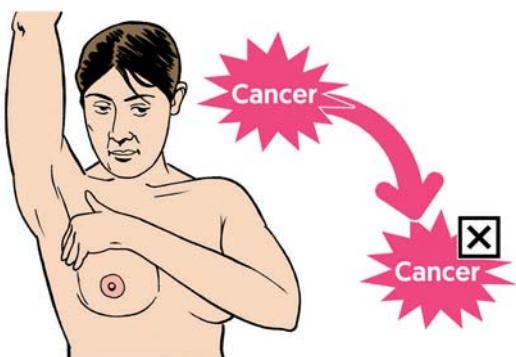


Being told you have breast cancer can make you feel lots of different emotions.

These could be fear, shock, anger, guilt, sadness. There's no right or wrong way to feel.

If you keep feeling low or worried, you can talk to your treatment team or breast care nurse and they can help you with this.

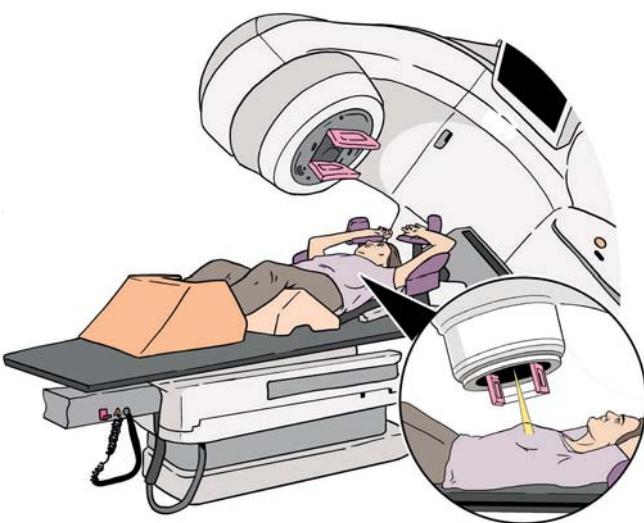
# Treatments for primary breast cancer



Treatment for invasive breast cancer tries to remove all the cancer in the breast and any under the arm. Treatment could include:



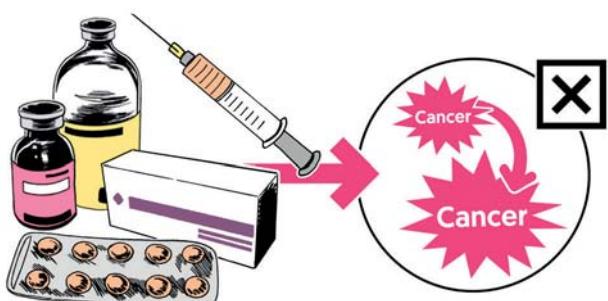
**Surgery.** This is when a doctor removes, replaces, or fixes something inside the body. This is also called an operation.



**Radiotherapy.** This is a treatment that uses strong x-rays to kill the cancer.



Other treatments that try to destroy any cancer cells that may have already spread from the breast into the body.



**Chemotherapy, targeted therapy and hormone therapy** are all types of these treatments.

**Chemotherapy** and **targeted therapy** use special drugs to kill the cancer.

**Hormone therapy** can stop the body from making the hormones that can make cancer grow.

You may be asked to have both types of treatments to better treat your cancer.



Your treatment team will explain why they want you to do a treatment, and can answer your questions.



You will also be given advice about how to help deal with **side effects** of treatment.



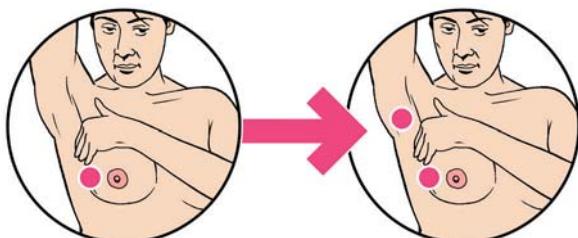
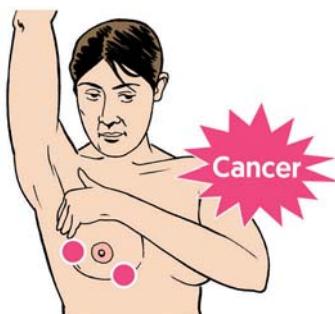
**Side effects** are things that happen because of your treatment. Like feeling tired or unwell.

You may need to go to different hospitals for different treatments.

For example, you may need to go to a different hospital for radiotherapy than you did for surgery.



# Decisions about treatment



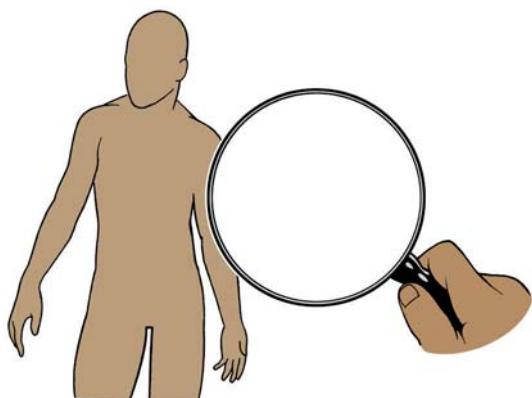
Your treatment team will think about many different things when deciding the best treatment for you.

Some of these are:

- Your age
- Your health
- The size of the cancer
- If there is cancer in more than one part of the breast
- If the cancer has spread under the arm



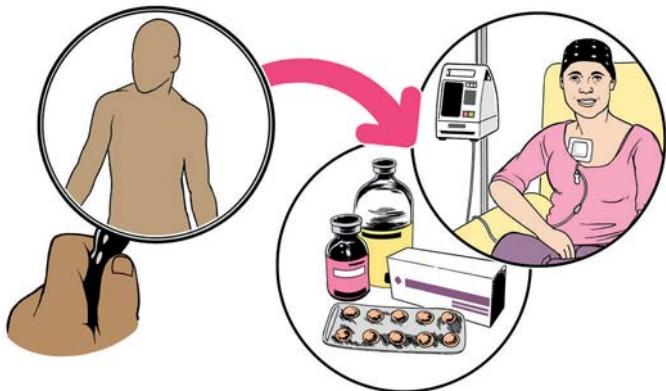
Tests will be done on cells taken from the breast.



You might also need tests on your body too. These could be **x-rays**, **scans**, and blood tests.



**X-rays** and **scans** are ways of taking photos of the inside of the body.



These tests are important because they help decide what sort of treatment will work best for you.

# Your treatment team and treatment decisions



People with breast cancer are cared for by a team of healthcare professionals with different skills and knowledge. This is your treatment team.



**Your treatment team can include:**

- **Breast care nurse**
- **Chemotherapy nurse**

These are nurses trained to give chemotherapy drugs
- **Clinical oncologist**

A doctor that treats cancer with radiotherapy alone or radiotherapy and cancer drugs





- Medical oncologist

A doctor that treats cancer with cancer drugs



- Pathologist

A doctor that tests cells



- Radiologist

A doctor that uses x-rays, ultrasound and scans to diagnose and treat disease



- Surgeon

This is the type of doctor that does surgery



- Therapeutic radiographer

This is a healthcare professional trained to give radiotherapy



Your treatment team will meet regularly to talk about your care.



You should be able to have talks with your treatment team and to ask any questions.



NHS patients can talk to a breast care nurse. Most private hospitals also have breast care nurses.



The breast care nurse is trained to give information and support to anyone diagnosed with breast cancer.

They can also be called a key worker.



Main

Your breast care nurse will be one of your main contacts when you have treatment and after.



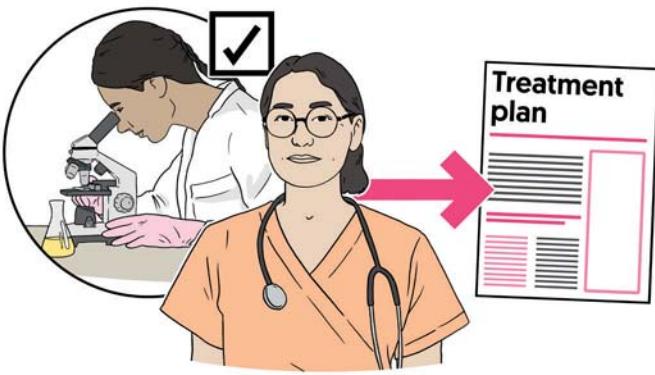
It is important to know who your breast care nurse is and how to contact them.



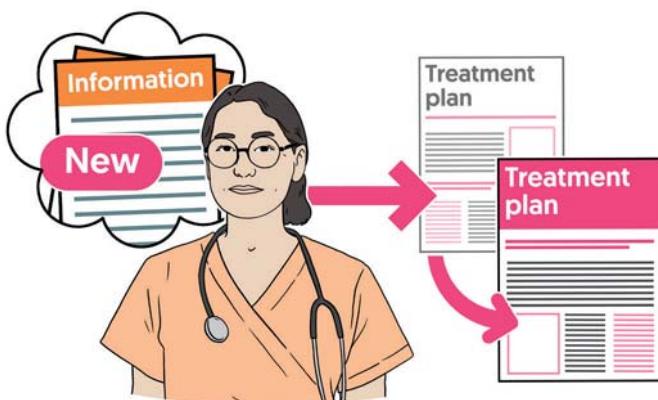
You may also be able to get other support services, like counselling or complementary therapies.



Your breast care nurse can tell you what support services you can get.



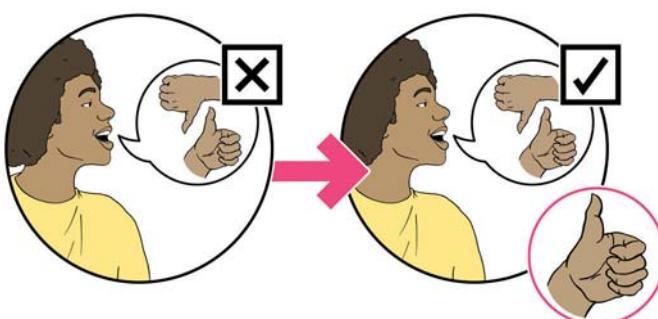
When your treatment team has all the information from your tests, they will talk to you about your treatment options and make a treatment plan.



Your treatment plan may change as your treatment team finds out more about your breast cancer.



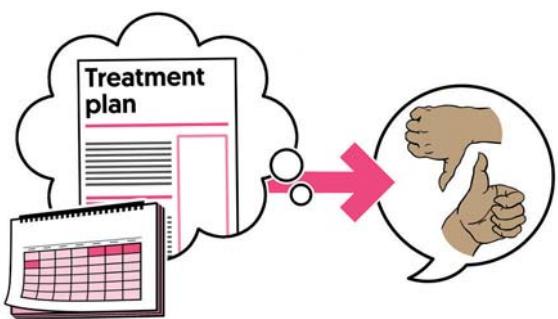
You can decide how much you want to be involved in decisions about your treatment.



You can change your mind about how much you want to be involved at any time in your treatment.



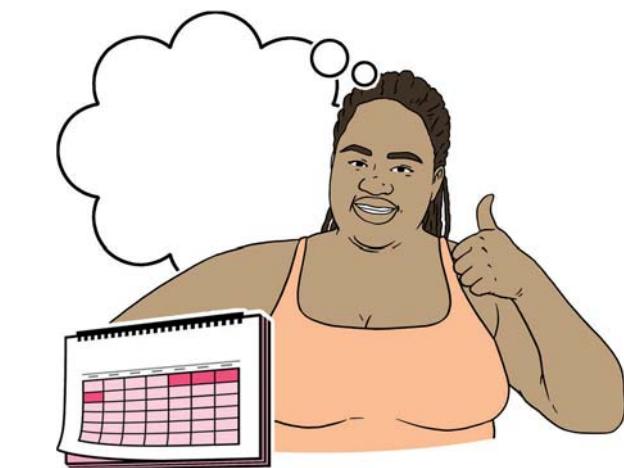
No matter how much you want to be involved, you should not be rushed into treatment.



You should be able take a few days to think about your treatment options before you decide what you want to do.



Taking a little time to think about your treatment is very unlikely to make a difference to your treatment.



You may feel more in control of what is happening if you have had a chance to think things through.



You will probably have some questions, and you should ask for as much information as you need.



Your treatment team can explain anything you don't understand.

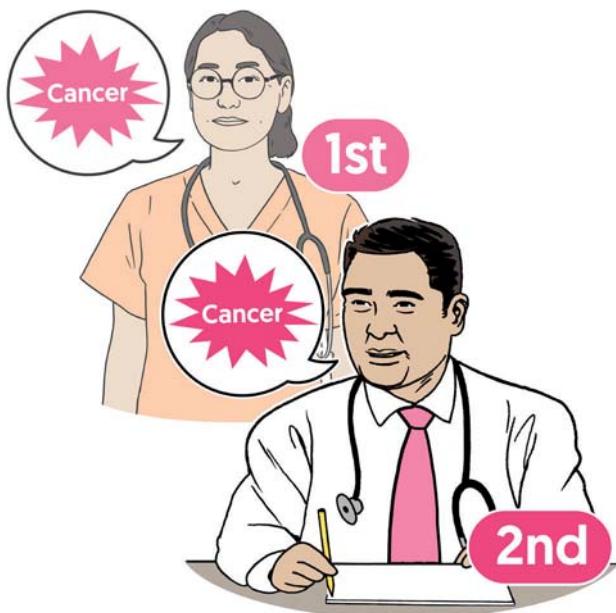
### Questions you might want to ask:

- Why is this the best treatment for me?
- Are there any other treatments I could have?
- When will treatment start?
- Where will I need to go for treatment?
- How long will my treatment take?
- What are side effects I could get?
- How will the treatment affect my everyday life?
- Will the treatment make it harder for me to have children?
- How successful do you think treatment will be?

# Asking for a second opinion



You can ask your treatment team for a different doctor to look at your diagnosis and treatment if you want to. This is called a second opinion.



A second opinion could be the same as the one you already have, and the time taken can slow down your treatment.

## Saying no to treatment



Sometimes people decide not to have some or all the treatments. There are many reasons for this.



Choosing not to have treatment is very personal and can be a hard decision to make.



Before you say no to treatment it is important to get all the information you can and think about your decision carefully.



You should also think about staying in touch with your treatment team for support.

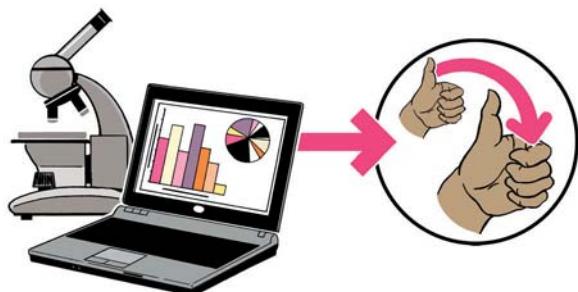


You can also talk to your doctor about your decision.

# Clinical trials



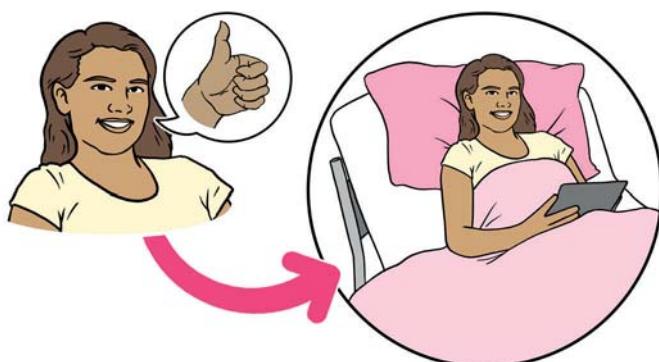
You may be asked to take part in a **clinical trial**.



**Clinical trials** do research to improve the treatment and care for patients.



They may be used to test new drugs or other treatments like different types of surgery.



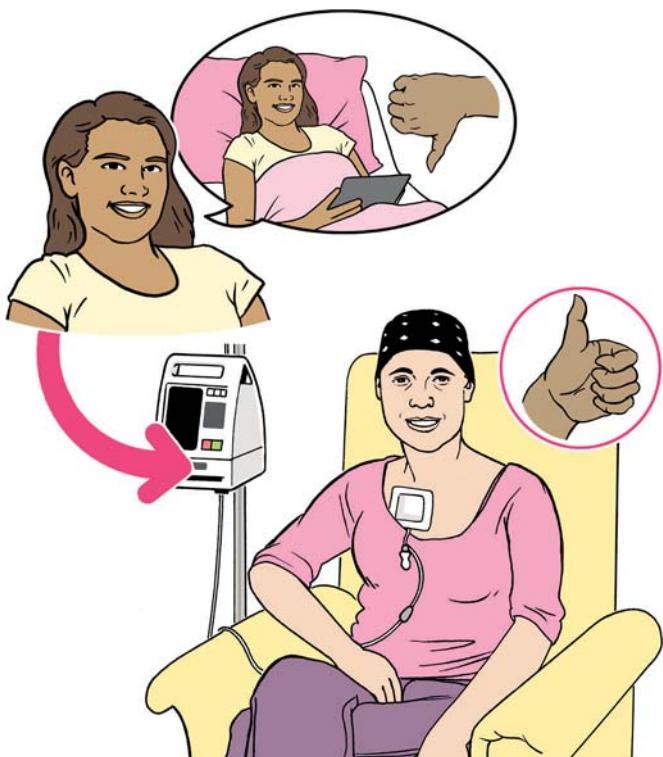
You will only take part in a clinical trial if you give your **informed consent**.



**Informed consent** means fully understanding what the trial is and what it will mean for you before agreeing to take part.



You should be given lots of information and time to talk about your options with a research nurse and your treatment team.



If you have been asked to take part and decide not to, you will continue to have treatment and care as before.

# Wellbeing and support



## Emotional wellbeing

After being told you have breast cancer, you may feel stressed or worried.



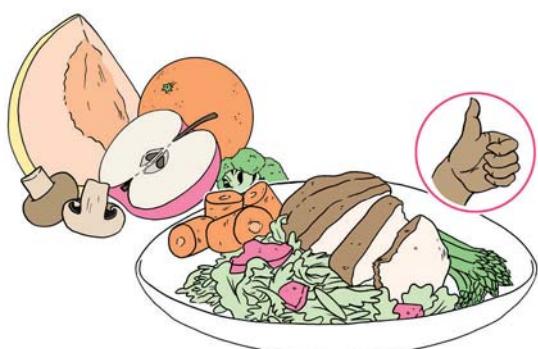
Making decisions about treatment can feel too much and you may feel worried about the future.



There are support services available to help you, like counselling.

## Diet

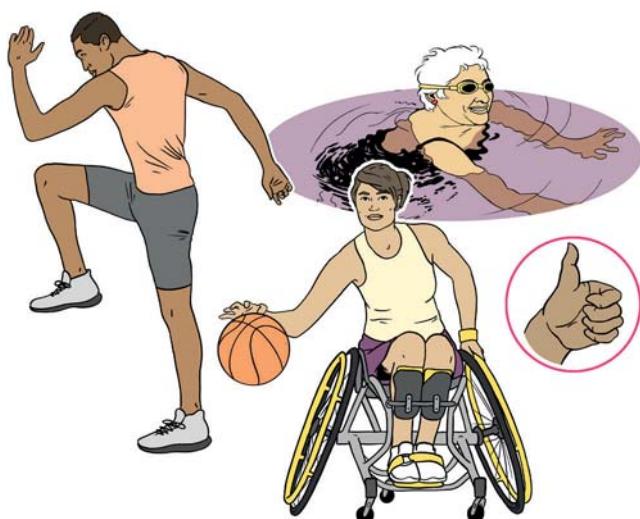
Some treatments for breast cancer can have side effects which can affect how you eat and drink.



But eating healthily can make you feel a bit better and give you more energy.

## Staying active

It can be difficult to stay active when you are having treatment for breast cancer.

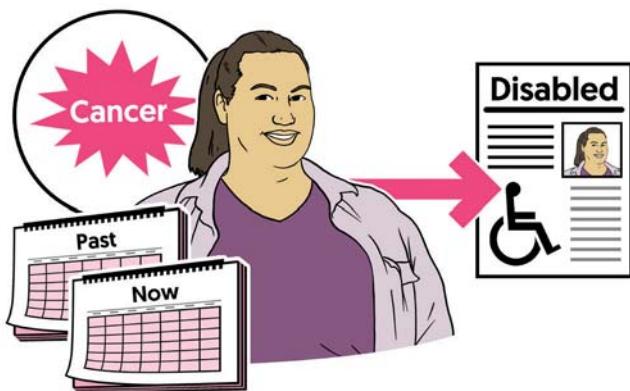


But being active can help to lower some side effects of treatment and may lower the chance of breast cancer coming back.

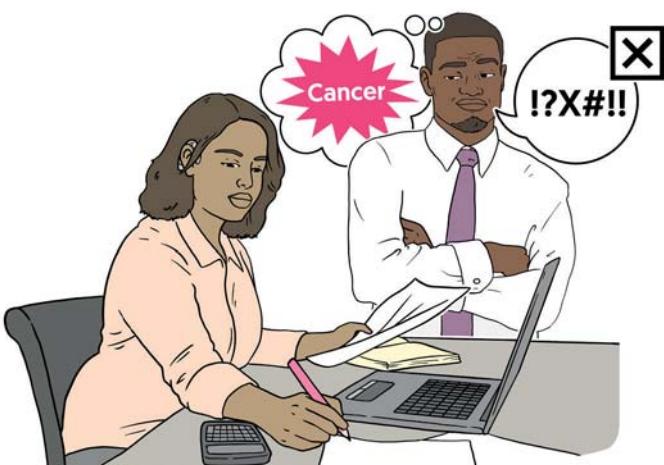


## Work and money

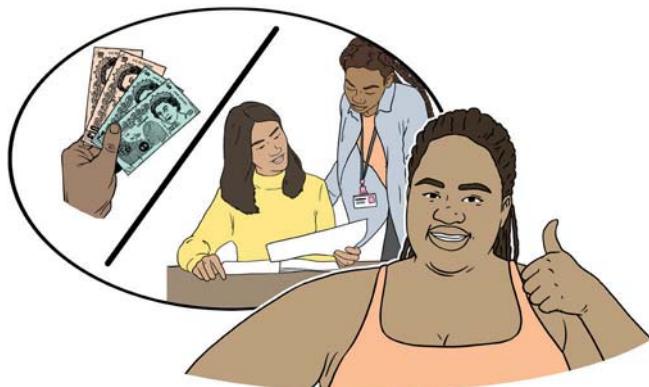
Many people worry about how breast cancer will affect their work and money.



Anyone who has or has had breast cancer is classed as disabled.



This means you are protected against being treated badly at work because of your cancer.



You may also be able to get some benefits and extra support. Some hospitals can help you with this.

# Finishing treatment



Everyone's experience of moving on after breast cancer is different.



How you feel may be very different to someone who has had a similar cancer and treatment.



Many people are surprised at how emotional they feel when they finish treatment.

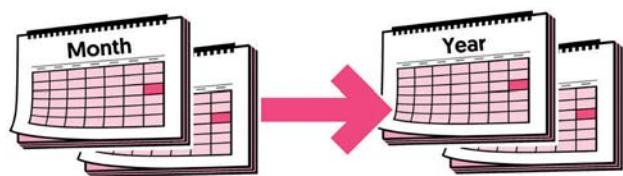


For many people the need for support and information does not end when treatment finishes.

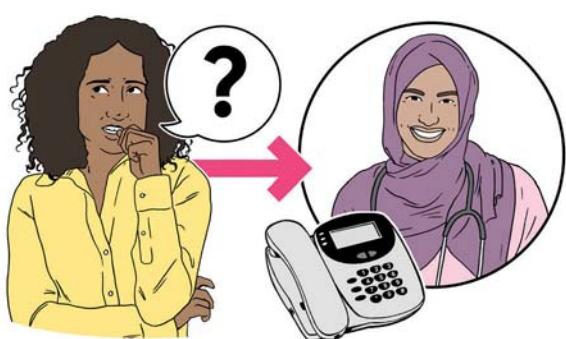
# Follow up



After your treatment ends, you may still need to go to hospital to see how you are getting better. This is known as follow up.



You will most likely have to go for follow ups often at first and then less often as time goes on.



You will be given a name and contact number to ring if you have any questions or worries between follow ups. This person will usually be your breast care nurse.



You can always talk to your doctor about any worries you have.

# More support



## Helpline

Worried about breast cancer, or have a question about breast health? Our team are ready to listen on our free helpline. Call **0808 800 6000**

Monday to Friday 9am–4pm  
and Saturday 9am–1pm.



To use our text relay service,  
call **18001 0808 800 6000**

You can also email  
**nurse@breastcancernow.org**



## Forum

We have online forum where you can talk about your experience of breast cancer with us and with lots of other people with experience of breast cancer.

**[breastcancernow.org/forum](http://breastcancernow.org/forum)**



## Someone Like Me

You never have to face breast cancer alone. Talk to somebody who understands what you're going through with Someone Like Me.

Call our Someone Like Me service on **0114 263 6490**



## Trusted information

Find information you can trust to help to understand breast cancer and order booklets at

[breastcancernow.org/  
publications](http://breastcancernow.org/publications)



## Face to face and online support

Everyone affected by breast cancer can turn to us for support. Our free services are always here for you.

[breastcancernow.org/  
oursupport](http://breastcancernow.org/oursupport)

# About this booklet

This easy read booklet was made by CHANGE. The original booklet is Treating primary breast cancer. This was written by Breast Cancer Now's clinical specialists, and reviewed by healthcare professionals and people affected by breast conditions.

For a full list of the sources used to research it:

Email [health-info@breastcancernow.org](mailto:health-info@breastcancernow.org)

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## Medical disclaimer

We make every effort to ensure that our health information is accurate and up to date, but it doesn't replace the information and support from professionals in your healthcare team. So far as is permitted by law, Breast Cancer Now doesn't accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this publication, or third-party information included or referred to in it.

# BREAST CANCER NOW

The research &  
support charity



**CHANGE**

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