

What to Expect After a Breast Cancer Diagnosis



Arnold Baskies, MD

Surgeon

To learn more, call
1-888-568-7337 or visit
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Every three minutes, a woman hears the words, "You have breast cancer." After that, it's hard to think about next steps. But a diagnosis is just the first step of a path through treatment and toward recovery.

"Every journey is different. We will consider your age, health, the size and location of the tumor and if the cancer has spread to come up with a treatment plan that is right for you," said Arnold Baskies, MD, chief of oncologic surgery at Lourdes Medical Center of Burlington County and chairman of the board of directors of the American Cancer Society's Eastern Division.

Most women will have surgery to

take out their tumor. Early-stage cancers can often be treated with a lumpectomy. This takes out only the lump and a rim of breast tissue that does not have cancer. Much of the breast can be preserved with this surgery.

Breast Reconstruction

For larger or advanced cancers, surgeons may favor a mastectomy. This removes the entire breast. Newer methods can preserve the nipple and other breast tissue. If you have your breast removed, you can often have it reconstructed at the same time.

During your operation, your surgeon may also take out lymph nodes from under your arm to check for cancer cells. A new study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggests most women with early-stage cancer need only one or two lymph nodes removed. This can lessen any side effects.

You might have other treatments before, after or instead of surgery. These target cancer from the inside and include:

- **Radiation therapy:** High-energy rays or particles destroy cancer cells;
- **Chemotherapy:** Medicines either kill cancer cells or prevent them from dividing;
- **Hormone therapy:** Drugs that block the body from producing estrogen or lower that hormone's ability to make cancer cells grow;
- **Targeted therapy:** Drugs pinpoint and attack cancer cells without harming normal cells; they often have less severe side effects than chemotherapy.

Success Stories

After you've followed your plan, you may be relieved it's over but perhaps concerned that the cancer will come back. The great news is that very few other cancers share the successful treatments that we now enjoy for breast cancer.

"Because of the research supported by the American Cancer Society and other organizations, we have ways of preventing breast cancer from occurring altogether," said Dr. Baskies.



Healthy Habit

Breast self-exams are a good way to find a lump that could be cancer. Get tips on the best ways to spot changes in your breasts with our **FREE** "In the Shower Guide to Breast Self-Exam." Order yours today by calling **1-888-LOURDES** (1-888-568-7337).

