



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust



Living with  beyond
breast cancer

Issued by the breast care team

building a caring future

HOSPITAL | COMMUNITY | HOME



www.northumbria.nhs.uk

This leaflet explains what will happen after your cancer treatment is complete and you move onto a programme of self-supported management. Your breast care team will discuss your follow-up plan in more detail.

Information is also available on a web-based patient portal, which the breast care team has developed. Your breast care nurse will be able to give you further information on how to access this site.

What is patient self-supported management?

This is a new approach to follow-up care after your cancer treatment has finished. It replaces routine clinic appointments meaning that you do not have to come to hospital when you are feeling well and have no symptoms. Instead, you can contact your specialist team and arrange to see them as and when you need to.

This is standard practice both nationally and regionally and encourages self-management follow-up for patients after breast cancer treatment.

The benefit of self-supported management

The main benefit is that you will not have to attend regular follow-up appointments in the breast clinic after the first year. Often these appointments are a source of anxiety and many patients find them unnecessary when they're feeling well.

Are there any risks?

Some people worry that not having regular follow-up appointments at the breast clinic may cause their cancer to go unnoticed if it comes back. There is no evidence to support this. We would encourage you to perform regular breast examinations as patients themselves tend to identify most symptoms themselves, such as pain or a new breast lump, in between routine appointments.

What happens if I have a concern or find a new lump?

If you are worried or notice a new symptom, contact the breast care nurses helpline on 0344 811 8111.

This helpline will be available Monday to Friday, 10am-12noon and 2pm-4pm and you will be able to speak to a breast care nurse or leave a message and your call will be returned the same working day.

The breast care nurse will discuss your concerns/symptoms and either arrange a clinic visit and/or investigations or refer you back to your own GP as appropriate.

What happens when I finish my treatment?

Reaching the end of your treatment can be a difficult time for many patients. Although you will feel relieved that your treatment is finally over, you may also experience a feeling of 'what now?' and you find that you miss the security of being seen at the hospital on a regular basis.

You may have had treatment including breast surgery (other than breast reconstruction), radiotherapy, chemotherapy, and endocrine therapy. Once this is complete, you will have:

A treatment summary review - this will be undertaken by a breast care nurse within 12 weeks of completing your treatment. You will receive an appointment to attend a clinic. The appointment will be approximately one hour long, either face-to-face in the clinic or by a telephone consultation.

A health needs assessment - this will be undertaken to identify any concerns that you or your family may have. This allows your breast care nurse to signpost you to other services for support and advice if you require it.

Attend a well being event - we suggest attending two events as this will give you information and advice on 'living with and beyond' your breast cancer treatment.

GP practice, cancer care review - this may be undertaken by your GP or practice nurse.

Further information about these elements of your care can be found in the Macmillan booklet 'your support and follow-up'.

It is important that you remain breast aware

You should try to examine your breasts regularly so that you are familiar with the way they look and feel.

If you find a new lump or other abnormality within your breast/s or near your mastectomy scar contact the breast care nurses. We will arrange for you to be reviewed by your breast care team and if required you may have a mammogram or ultrasound of the area.

Evidence shows us that there might be a lot of innocent changes in your breast following treatment which are completely harmless. These two actions are the best way to find new changes in the breast that might be significant.

Will I have regular mammograms?

All women who have had breast cancer have regular follow-up mammograms. These appointments will be annual for five years, or until the age of 50, and will automatically be sent out to you. The results will also be sent out to you.

If you need other investigations such as an MRI the appointments for these tests will automatically be sent to you.

Leading a healthy lifestyle

Many people affected by cancer want to make positive changes to their lives. Steps include:

- Giving up smoking
- Taking part in some physical exercise
- Eating a well-balanced diet
- Keeping a healthy weight
- Limiting how much alcohol you drink
- Learning how to reduce stress and relax more

Managing menopausal and other symptoms caused by my treatment

Some people may experience side effects as a result of treatment, which may or may not be troublesome. You can manage many of these symptoms yourself. More information can be found in the Macmillan leaflet 'late effects of breast cancer treatment'.

Where can I find more support?

You may already have found that people find different ways of living with breast cancer after having treatment. There is no right or wrong way, just what works for you. Some people prefer not to talk, while others like to get support from talking about their experience.

Breast care nurses contacts

North Tyneside General Hospital: **0191 293 4183**

Wansbeck General Hospital: **01670 529 319**

Hexham General Hospital: **01434 655 386**

Local support

Macmillan North Tyneside: **0344 811 8111** ext 4687

Macmillan Northumberland: **07598 620 599**
www.northumberlandcancersupportgroup.co.uk

Coping with Cancer: **0191 280 5610**
www.copingwithcancer.org.uk

Maggie's (Freeman Hospital): **0191 233 6600**

FACT: **0191 442 0833** info@fact-cancersupport.co.uk

Shine: northeast@shinecancersupport.org

National support

Cancer Research UK: **0300 123 1022**
www.cancerresearchuk.org

Breast Cancer Care: **0808 800 6000**
www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support: **0845 601 6161**
www.macmillan.org.uk

Breast Care Campaign: www.breastcare.co.uk

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of Information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511 098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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General Enquiries - **03 44 811 8111**

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