

# Advanced breast cancer

Information for the public

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[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

Breast cancer is called 'advanced' if it can't be removed with surgery or if it has spread to other parts of the body. We want this guideline to make a difference to people with advanced breast cancer by making sure:

- you know what treatments are available, and you get good, balanced information and help to work out what you would prefer
- you get psychological support at important times too, not just medical care
- problems such as pain, lymphoedema and fatigue are managed to give you the best quality of life possible
- if breast cancer has come back after previous treatment, the type of receptors (oestrogen or HER2) may be looked at again as this might mean different treatment options could be tried.

## Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your health professionals should give you clear information and explain about the likely benefits and downsides of any treatment. They should help you to understand your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should talk to you about how much you want be involved in decisions – this may change over time.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what do you want to get out of any treatment or care?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to a treatment that worry you more than others?
- How will the treatment affect your day to day life?
- What happens if you don't want to have treatment?

Ask your health professionals if they can show you information that compares different treatment options for advanced breast cancer. These are called decision aids and can help you reach a decision that is right for you.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your health professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

## Where can I find out more?

[NHS Choices](#) has more information about advanced breast cancer.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Breast Cancer Now](#)
- [Breast Cancer Care](#), 0808 800 6000
- [Cancer Research UK Patient Information](#), 0808 800 4040
- [Lymphoedema Support Network](#), 020 7351 4480
- [Macmillan Cancer Support](#), 0808 808 0000
- [Marie Curie Cancer Care](#), 0800 090 2309

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by breast cancer and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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