

Breast Cancer Survivorship Guidelines

What Is the American Cancer Society/ American Society of Clinical Oncology Breast Cancer Survivorship Care Guideline?

The Breast Cancer Survivorship Care Guideline is advice from the American Cancer Society and the American Society of Clinical Oncology to help doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals provide care for breast cancer survivors who have finished cancer treatment. The cancer survivorship care guideline addresses issues that can occur in breast cancer survivors after their treatment.

Why Is the Breast Cancer Survivorship Care Guideline Needed?

- Each year, about 231,840 women in the United States are diagnosed with breast cancer. Most of these women will receive treatment and survive for many years.
- Starting at diagnosis and until the end of treatment, patients with breast cancer receive most of their health care from specialists such as a surgeon, medical or radiation oncologist, etc. Once treatment is finished, most of the medical care for these patients will be provided by their primary care clinician.
- Breast cancer occurs mostly in older women, and many of them have other health issues that are treated by primary care clinicians.
- Problems can be caused by the cancer or by the treatments. It is possible for side effects or complications to go on or even occur after treatment is complete. Here are some examples:
 - Numbness or discomfort in the hands and feet (neuropathy).
 - Swelling in the arm, breast, or chest wall (lymphedema).
 - Early menopause; hot flashes.
 - Distress, depression, and anxiety.
 - Fatigue.
 - Thinning of bones (osteoporosis); broken bones.
 - Memory issues; difficulty concentrating.
 - Body image concerns.

What Is Included in This Guideline?

The guideline provides recommendations:

- To help your specialists and primary care clinician work together to meet your health care needs.
- To help you get well or stay well through physical activity, a healthy diet, and quitting tobacco if you use it.
- To watch for the return of breast cancer and the use of screening tests to look for other types of cancer.
- To watch for symptoms that could be side effects or late complications of breast cancer and its treatment.

How Should I Use This Guideline?

The guideline gives you important information that you should discuss with your primary care clinician.

- Did my specialist (surgeon, medical or radiation oncologist, etc) give a written survivorship care plan to my primary care clinician that described my treatment, possible side effects, and important follow-up care?
- How often will I need check-ups? What tests will I need to check for side effects, complications, the cancer returning, or new cancers? What other doctors should I see for that care?
- Is there anything I can do to help my physical or mental side effects after cancer treatment? If so, when should I start taking these steps?

As you complete your treatment, think about the care you will receive as you move forward. You will want your primary care clinician to know about your breast cancer history and how it was treated. You will also want them to know what to watch for and how often to see you. And most important, you will want your primary care clinician to work with you so that you are getting the care that is right for you. ■

© 2015 American Cancer Society, doi: 10.3322/caac.21322