YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH BREAST CANCER

This map describes what many women diagnosed with breast cancer experience throughout their journey. It provides a brief overview of possible treatments, members of your healthcare team, and a rough timeline of the journey.

Every breast cancer journey is different just like every breast cancer patient is different. For this reason, it is important to remember that the information in this map is meant as a general guideline and is not specific to any one person or diagnosis.
Diagnosis to Surgery

Finding a Lump: Is it Breast Cancer?

WHAT HAPPENS?
If a suspicious lump is found, then the family doctor or primary healthcare provider sends me to have imaging tests and/or a biopsy done.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Family Doctor or Primary Healthcare Provider
The family doctor or primary healthcare provider looks after my general healthcare. If the results from my mammogram or breast exam are suspicious, the family doctor or primary healthcare provider sends to me the radiation technologist for further testing.

Radiation Technologist
A radiation technologist does the mammogram, which is an X-ray of the breast.

Radiologist
The radiologist is a doctor who reads and makes sense of the results from imaging tests, such as mammograms. A radiologist can also do a biopsy. A biopsy is when a thin needle is used to remove small amounts of tissue from the breast.

Getting the News: I Have Breast Cancer

WHAT HAPPENS?
If the imaging and/or biopsy results are positive for breast cancer, the test results are sent back to my family doctor or primary healthcare provider who should refer me to a surgeon as soon as possible.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Me
More than ever, now is an important time to remember that I am the most important member of my healthcare team.

Throughout my cancer journey, there are many things I can do, such as:

• I can learn about my cancer so that I make the right choices about treatment.

• I can talk to my healthcare team about any questions and concerns that I have. That is why I should write these questions down as soon as I think of them.

• I can write down all the different appointments to stay organized.

• I can ask my healthcare team how to contact them between my appointments if I have questions.

• It is very important to keep my body as healthy as I can while I have breast cancer. I can do this by exercising, eating well, and managing my stress.
**My Pathology Report**

2 - 4 weeks

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**Surgery: Taking Out the Tumour**

**WHAT HAPPENS?**

Usually, surgery is the first step in treating breast cancer. The type of surgery that I may have depends on many different factors, such as what my mammogram and biopsy results show about my cancer.

**WHO IS INVOLVED?**

**Surgeon**

A surgeon is a doctor who goes over my biopsy and other test results with me, including information such as how big the cancer is and if it has spread outside of the breast. Together, we then decide which surgery is right for me. There are two types of surgeries:

- **Lumpectomy**: A lumpectomy is a surgery that removes the tumour and a small circle of healthy breast tissue around the tumour.
- **Mastectomy**: A mastectomy is a surgery that removes the whole breast.

**Registered Nurse**

A registered nurse works with the surgeon and the rest of the healthcare team to help me during and after my surgery. Registered nurses can teach me more about my cancer and its treatments.

**Breast Reconstruction: Do I want it?**

**WHAT HAPPENS?**

After the surgery, the surgeon will discuss the **pathology report** with me and most likely refer me to a cancer clinic, where I may talk about further treatment options with an oncologist.

**WHO IS INVOLVED?**

**Pathologist**

The pathologist is a doctor who looks at the cancer tissue that was taken out in surgery and writes a summary that describes the stage of my cancer and if I will need more treatment. This is known as my pathology report. The report is sent to my surgeon who should then refer me to a cancer clinic where I will meet with an oncologist (a cancer specialist).

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**After the Surgery: Do I Need More Treatment?**

**WHAT HAPPENS?**

After the surgery, the surgeon will discuss the **pathology report** with me and most likely refer me to a cancer clinic, where I may talk about further treatment options with an oncologist.

**WHO IS INVOLVED?**

**Pathologist**

The pathologist is a doctor who looks at the cancer tissue that was taken out in surgery and writes a summary that describes the stage of my cancer and if I will need more treatment. This is known as my pathology report. The report is sent to my surgeon who should then refer me to a cancer clinic where I will meet with an oncologist (a cancer specialist).
WHAT HAPPENS?
At my first appointment with an oncologist, I will find out if I need more treatment. If I do, then my oncologist will talk to me about what treatment plan is right for me. It is possible that I will meet with both a medical and radiation oncologist.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Medical Oncologist
A medical oncologist is a doctor that treats cancer through different drugs. This is known as chemotherapy. A medical oncologist also uses medication to treat cancer through hormone therapy. I should ask my medical oncologist for more information about which drugs or combination of drugs will work best for me.

Radiation Oncologist
A radiation oncologist is a doctor that treats cancer using high-energy X-rays. This is known as radiation therapy.

SUPPORT

Oncology Nurse
An oncology nurse cares for patients living with a cancer diagnosis. He/she is trained to administer the chemotherapy treatments as well as educate and support me throughout treatment and recovery.

Oncology Social Worker or Patient Navigator
An oncology social worker or patient navigator helps patients deal with the non-medical aspects of breast cancer. They can connect me with resources related to coping, financial aid, drug benefits, local support, and much more.
WHAT HAPPENS?
It is normal to have concerns about the cancer coming back. That is why it is a good idea to talk about a follow-up plan with my oncologist.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Oncologist
Discussing a follow-up plan with the oncologist will allow the healthcare team to:
• keep track of side effects and symptoms
• detect early signs of the cancer coming back

Family Doctor or Primary Healthcare Provider
Getting regular check-ups with my family doctor or primary healthcare provider is also important. I can ask my family doctor or primary healthcare provider how often I should get these check-ups. If I do not have a family doctor, I should look at page 25 in The People You Might Meet On Your Breast Cancer Journey: Your Healthcare Team tool to get more information on how to find one.