

Patient information

After Treatment for Breast Cancer

After your treatment has finished, you will continue to have checkups with your surgical team. This will involve physical examinations and annual mammograms. The type of cancer you were diagnosed with will determine the number of years this will continue.

Breast awareness

Although you will be monitored with yearly mammograms, it's still a good idea to be aware of what is normal for you. After treatment your breast may feel and look different. If you notice anything unusual between appointments contact one of the breast care nurses on: 01284 713281 or oncology specialist nurses on 01284 713212.

Physical effects after cancer treatment

- **Fatigue:** Most people feel very tired after radiotherapy or chemotherapy. This can continue for some months after treatment and sometimes longer. There are different ways of coping with fatigue, be realistic about what you can do and plan your day to enable you to rest and do the things you want to do. Gentle exercise can also help reduce fatigue.
- **Eating difficulties:** You may have lost or gained weight as a result of your treatment. If you are having difficulty eating or your appetite is low ask your specialist nurse to refer you to a dietician for advice.

Radiotherapy – long term effects

- Your skin may appear darker in colour.

- Your skin may feel different to touch and your breast may feel harder.
- Hair loss may be permanent or new hair growth can be a different colour or texture.
- Swelling to the arm (lymphoedema) can occur as a result of both surgery and radiotherapy.
- You may develop red spidery marks on the skin (telangectasia) caused by broken blood vessels.

Radiotherapy is planned and given to limit the chance of side effects occurring and very few people actually develop long term effects.

Psychological and self-help therapies

There are several psychological and self help approaches that may help you to cope with the emotional effects of cancer. If you feel you need some extra support you can contact your GP who may be able to refer you for counselling free of charge on the NHS. Counselling is also available in the Macmillan Unit, please contact the Macmillan Information Centre on 01284 713023. This service is for patients only and is available by appointments on Friday afternoons.

Some people find local support groups useful. To contact the West Suffolk, Thetford and Sudbury Cancer Support Group ring:

- John Place, Bury St Edmunds 01284 766706
- Marion Bedster, Thetford 01842 763734

Email: cancer@cancerselfhelp.org.uk

Breast Cancer Care offers free information and support to those affected by breast cancer or with breast health concerns: call freephone: 0808 800 6000 or visit the website: www.breastcancercare.org.

Healthy lifestyle

- **Eating well:** Eating a balanced diet and keeping to a healthy weight will help you recover more quickly and increase your energy. It can also help to reduce the risk of new cancers, heart disease, strokes and diabetes.

- **Exercise:** Regular exercise after treatment improves your fitness and helps you recover. It can help reduce depression and anxiety by encouraging the release of body endorphins (chemicals). Research has shown that exercise can reduce the risk of some cancers such as breast, bowel and womb. For more information on eating well and exercise contact:

onelifesuffolk.co.uk or call 01473 718193 or

Macmillan.org.uk or call free on 0808 808 0000 (Monday – Friday 9am – 8pm).

- **Work:** When you plan to go back to work, arrange a meeting with your employer or human resources department adviser. You can discuss either a phased return to work or you may need to discuss reducing your hours or changing your job description.
- **Financial Issues:** There are many organisations which can provide financial support and advice. To contact the Macmillan Benefits Advice Service telephone; 01473 264848 or email macmillanbenefitadvice@ Suffolk.gov.uk

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the hospital website www.wsh.nhs.uk and click on the link, or visit the disabledgo website:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>