

General Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Patient Information about Breast Cancer

<http://www.oncologychannel.com/patient-information-breast-cancer/general.shtml>

After a breast cancer diagnosis is made, information from the biopsy is used to determine the specific type and classification of the disease and develop a treatment plan. Women should work closely with their health care team (e.g., OB/GYN, oncologist, radiation oncologist) to develop this plan. Breast cancer treatment may involve surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, and/or hormone therapy, or a combination of these therapies.

The most common type of breast cancer is called invasive (or infiltrative) ductal carcinoma (IDC). Breast cancer also can be classified in many different ways, including the following:

- **Stage of the cancer** (e.g., Stage 0–Stage IV; determined by the size of the tumor and whether cancer cells have spread to the lymph nodes or to surrounding tissue)
- **Grade of the cancer** (e.g., Grade 1–Grade 3; pattern) and rate of cell growth
- Whether or not cancer cells have **hormone receptors** (e.g., "ER-positive" [positive for estrogen receptors], "PR-positive" [positive for progesterone receptors], "ER-negative" [negative for estrogen receptors])
- Whether or not cancer cells produce high levels of certain proteins (called **oncogene overexpression**; e.g., HER2-positive breast cancer)

Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Breast Cancer

- What type of breast cancer do I have?
- What is the size of the tumor?
- What is the stage and grade of the cancer?
- Is my breast cancer hormone receptor positive?
- What is the prognosis for my specific type of breast cancer?
- Will you perform additional testing to determine if the cancer has spread to the lymph nodes or other organs?
- What treatments do you recommend to treat my breast cancer and why?

- Do you recommend that I have a sentinel lymph node biopsy? Why or why not?
- If I require chemotherapy, do you recommend I have this treatment before surgery or after surgery? What are the pros and cons of this recommendation?
- What additional treatments might you recommend?
- What are the benefits of the recommended treatments?
- What are the potential risks and side effects associated with these treatments?
- How will severe side effects during treatment be managed?
- Who will be involved in my treatment? Will I see a surgeon, an oncologist, or a radiation oncologist?
- What steps can I take to improve the success of my cancer treatment?
- How often will my condition be monitored during treatment? What type of testing will be conducted to determine if my therapy is working?
- Do you recommend that I have genetic testing?
- Should I participate in a clinical trial? Why or why not?
- What types of additional support are available to me during and after treatment?
- Can you suggest additional resources that may be helpful?

Notes/Additional Information