

The best care for women with breast cancer

Improved treatment for breast cancer means there's often no need for women diagnosed with this disease to lose a breast. Thanks to mammography (breast X-ray), a cancer can be detected when it's very small - before a doctor or a woman can feel it. Besides increasing the chances of successful treatment, it may also mean the cancer can be removed without the loss of a breast.

How can doctors treat cancer without removing the breast?

Providing the cancer hasn't spread, it's possible for doctors to remove just the tumour, along with a small amount of tissue around it. This removes the cancer, but preserves the shape and feel of the breast as much as possible. This operation is called a lumpectomy. Because breast cancer may also spread to glands in the armpit called lymph nodes, these glands will need removing to see if the cancer has spread. There's no difference in survival between women who have a mastectomy and women who have a lumpectomy.

Are there disadvantages of lumpectomy?

Women who have a lumpectomy instead of having their breast removed usually need radiotherapy on the breast five days a week for a six week period. Most women cope well with this. However women with early breast cancer are usually given the choice of having a lumpectomy and radiation therapy, or a mastectomy (removal of the whole breast) without radiotherapy.

What other treatments are there?

Chemotherapy and hormone therapy are both drug treatments. They are sometimes used in addition to mastectomy and lumpectomy, if doctors think there's a good chance the cancer

may recur. Although the side effects of chemotherapy may be unpleasant, they don't last for long, and can be controlled with medication.

If a woman has a mastectomy can her breast be replaced?

It's often possible for plastic surgeons to build a new breast, using a woman's own tissue and/or an implant. Because of the controversy about silicone breast implants, doctors usually use implants filled with saline. Most women still choose a prosthesis (artificial breast) which can be worn inside a bra.

Where can women turn for emotional support?

The Breast Cancer Support Service, a network of volunteer visitors who have experienced breast cancer themselves. Some of these specially trained women speak other languages. For information, contact the Cancer Council on (02) 9334 1900.

Where can I have a mammogram?

High quality mammograms are available, free, to women aged 50 and over through Breastscreen Australia. Women in this age group need a mammogram every two years. For an appointment at the nearest breast screening centre, call 13 20 50. For help to make the call in English, ring the Telephone Interpreter Service on 13 14 50. X-rays are done by women radiographers, and interpreters can be arranged on request..

What else can women do to look after their breasts?

Check their own breasts regularly for any changes, and ask their doctor to examine them each year as well. Most lumps women find in their breasts are not cancer - but it's important to check with a doctor to make sure.

How to contact the Multicultural Breast Cancer Information Service

Available in Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin and Italian, this service provides emotional and practical support to women with breast cancer, their family and friends; information about breast cancer, including treatment options; information about other services related to breast cancer such as support groups. Callers may remain anonymous and all information will be kept in confidence. The service is available from 9am to 5pm.

Arabic	(02) 9334 1961	Monday and Tuesday
Cantonese & Mandarin	(02) 9334 1855	Monday and Tuesday
Italian	(02) 9334 1983	Thursday and Friday

October 27 is Australia's Breast Cancer Day.



English
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