

Recurrence



Breast cancer that returns following breast cancer treatment is called **recurrence**. There is a 5% chance that a cancer can return after completing cancer treatment anytime in a lifetime. Recurrence can happen involving the same breast, the opposite breast or in a completely different area of the body.

Learning that cancer has recurred is devastating news to hear. While you may be afraid and discouraged by a new diagnosis, adjusting to this new chapter in your life means once again taking charge of your treatment plan. Your understanding of new treatments, building your medical team and your resolve to fight this cancer recurrence are crucial to your survival.

Always follow-up with your medical provider immediately if you notice changes in your breasts or body such as:

- Return of the cancer symptoms you had before (for example, a lump, skin changes, or new growth where your cancer first started)
- Allergic reactions such as rashes, severe itching, swelling, or wheezing
- Bleeding or unexplained bruising
- Bloody stools or blood in your urine
- A persistent cough that doesn't go away
- Diarrhea, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting
- Excessive tiredness
- Frequent headaches
- Lumps, bumps, or swellings anywhere on your breast or body
- Persistent chills or fevers
- Shortness of breath
- Trouble swallowing
- Unusual pain that does not go away and is unrelated to an injury
- Weight loss without dieting

With a recurrence you need the same care and support as you did with the initial diagnosis of breast cancer. In fact, you may need even more to deal with your disappointment, fear and medical treatments. As you process this news, resist the tendency to isolate yourself from your family, friends and other supports.

Remember...you are not alone.

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