

Recurrence

In your conversations with your doctors and treatment of your original diagnosis of breast cancer the term “recurrence” must be addressed with your doctors. Breast cancer can reappear or return after your first successful treatment episodes in the original breast, the surgery site, the other breast or other body areas if the cancer was in other sites. We can never be free and clear of cancer in our lifetime. There is a 5% chance that a cancer can return in anyone after successful cancer treatment at anytime in their lives, within the first year to even 20 plus years later.

Coping with a recurrence can be hard, but don't let it control you and your life. While you may feel devastated by this new diagnosis; adjusting to this new chapter in your life means again taking charge, understanding the new treatments, building your medical team and your resolve to fight this cancer recurrence.

Staying aware of any signs and symptoms is crucial but do not obsess about cancer returning. Always follow-up with your doctor if you have noticed changes in your breasts or body such as:

- w Return of the cancer symptoms you had before (for example, a lump, skin changes, or new growth where your cancer first started)
- w New or unusual pain that seems unrelated to an injury and does not go away
- w Weight loss without trying
- w Bleeding or unexplained bruising
- w A rash or allergic reaction, such as swelling, severe itching, or wheezing
- w Chills or fevers
- w Headaches
- w Shortness of breath
- w Bloody stools or blood in your urine
- w Lumps, bumps, or swelling
- w Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, or trouble swallowing
- w A cough that doesn't go away

- w Any other signs mentioned by your doctor or nurse or any unusual symptoms that you just can't explain

With a recurrence you need the same care and support as you did with the first diagnosis of breast cancer. In fact, you may need them even more to deal with your feelings, pain and the medical treatments. Take your time to process this news but don't hide or isolate yourself from your family, friends and loved ones. Maintain your connections with your support group...you are still a survivor, living with cancer and a fighter the second time around!

Remember...you are not alone.

Information about recurrence:

<http://www.cancer.org/acs/groups/cid/documents/webcontent/002014-pdf.pdf>

<http://secondopinion-tv.org/episode/breast-cancer-recurrence>