

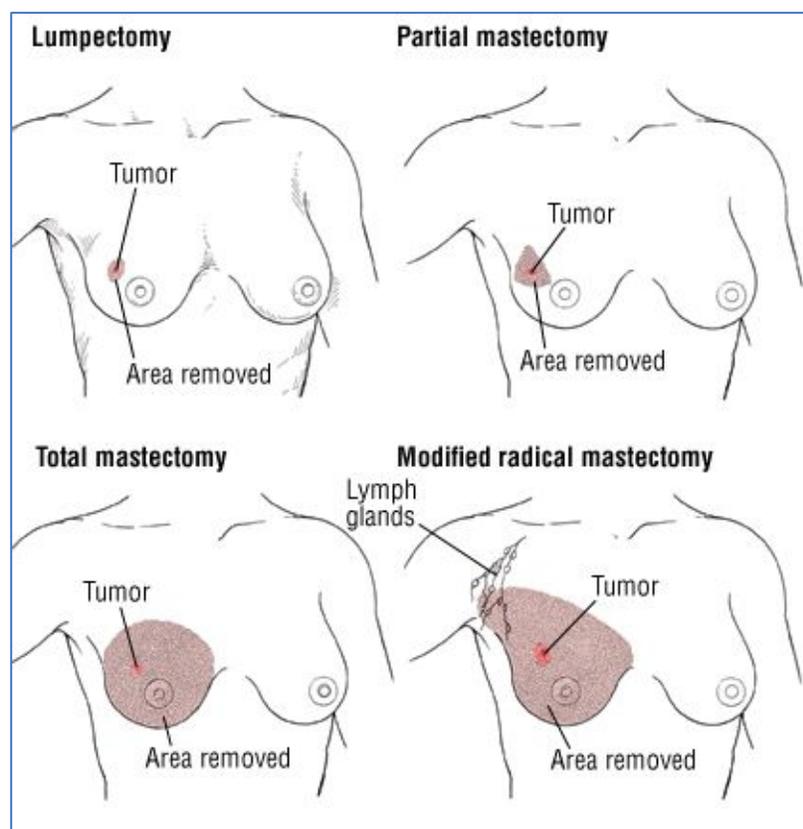
Breast Cancer Treatments

Surgery

After you have been diagnosed with breast cancer, your doctor will develop a treatment plan for you. You will have a variety of medical team members such as clinic nurses, cancer care coordinator, surgeon, radiologists, chemotherapy team, plastic surgeon, and others as needed.

Always make sure you understand the treatment plan and the expected outcomes. An evaluation of your medical concerns, personal preferences and treatment recommendations will be discussed with you. Options may include breast surgery as local treatments such as:

- Lumpectomy
- Simple or Total Mastectomy
- Modified Radical Mastectomy
- Radical Mastectomy
- Sentinel lymph node biopsy
- Axillary lymph node dissection
- Breast reconstruction



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Follow-up Treatment

Adjuvant, systemic treatments may be given before and/or after surgical treatments have been performed to help kill any cancers that may still be in the body after surgery. Systemic therapy also keeps cancer cells from growing, recurring and spreading to other parts of the body.

Depending on the size of the tumor, pathology and stage of the cancer. Follow-up therapies may be given before and/or after surgical treatment:

- Chemotherapy
- Hormonal therapy
- Radiation therapy
- Targeted therapy

Surgery: What to Expect

It helps to prepare yourself emotionally and physically for breast cancer surgery and the loss of a portion or your whole breast(s). Recovery from reconstructive breast surgery is similar. Make sure you understand the surgery and the aftercare required. Review the information your plastic surgeon has given you about your type of breast surgery.

Breast surgery generally can be a 1-day outpatient or extended stay in-patient for Lumpectomy or several days in-patient for Mastectomy depending on your general health condition.

Some hospitals give patients a special garment called a “Softee” or a temporary prosthesis for full and partial mastectomy patients to wear home. You can undergo an assessment later for a custom fitted prosthesis, which is covered by most insurance providers with authorization from your physician.

You will have pain and limited movement after surgery in the breast and chest area, under your arms and even in your back. Be careful and give yourself time to heal.

- Wear loose and comfortable clothing that does not restrict movement.

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- Keep the surgical site clean and dry as possible.
- Inform your doctor if you experience surgical bleeding, blood clots, fluid buildup, infections, pain, swelling, or other problems in or around the surgical site(s), arms or chest areas.
- You may have drainage tubes that will be removed in about 2 weeks after surgery. Drainage tube removal can be uncomfortable.
- After the bandages are removed, look at yourself in the mirror when you are ready. This may be an emotional experience and it may be helpful to rely on someone from your support network to discuss your feelings.
- Everyone's cancer experience is different. Their type of cancer is unique. Treatments and surgeries will look different depending on the location and size of the tumor(s) and size of the breasts. The length of time it takes to recover and heal is determined by type of breast cancer and treatments.
- Your plastic surgeon will advise you about showering, bathing, and wound care. Most women return to normal activities within 6 to 8 weeks after surgery. It may be several weeks before you can do strenuous exercise.
- Do not drive, carry or lift heavy objects, and no cleaning, mopping, or vacuuming with your surgical arm(s) until your doctor approves it about six weeks after surgery. Doing heavy and repetitive activities can cause arm swelling, fluid retention in the arms, lymph edema, nerve pain and wound infection. Ask someone for help with household chores and shopping.
- Surgical scars and numbness will take years to heal and fade. Using a gentle lubricant cream or shea butter daily on the scars will help them heal and break down the connective tissue alleviating tightness.
- Wait until you heal from surgery to be fitted for a post mastectomy bra and prosthesis for the best fit and a more comfortable experience.
- Discuss other types of breast surgeries with your doctors such as reconstructive surgery for nipples, tattoos for areolas or surgical scars.
- Breast cancer surgery changes your appearance, and it can have psychological effects on you and others as well. Ask for help in adjusting to the new you.

Sources:

American Cancer Society, www.cancer.org, GetBCFacts.com, www.getbcfacts.com, and Breast Cancer Doctor, <http://breastdoctoraustin.com/treatment>