

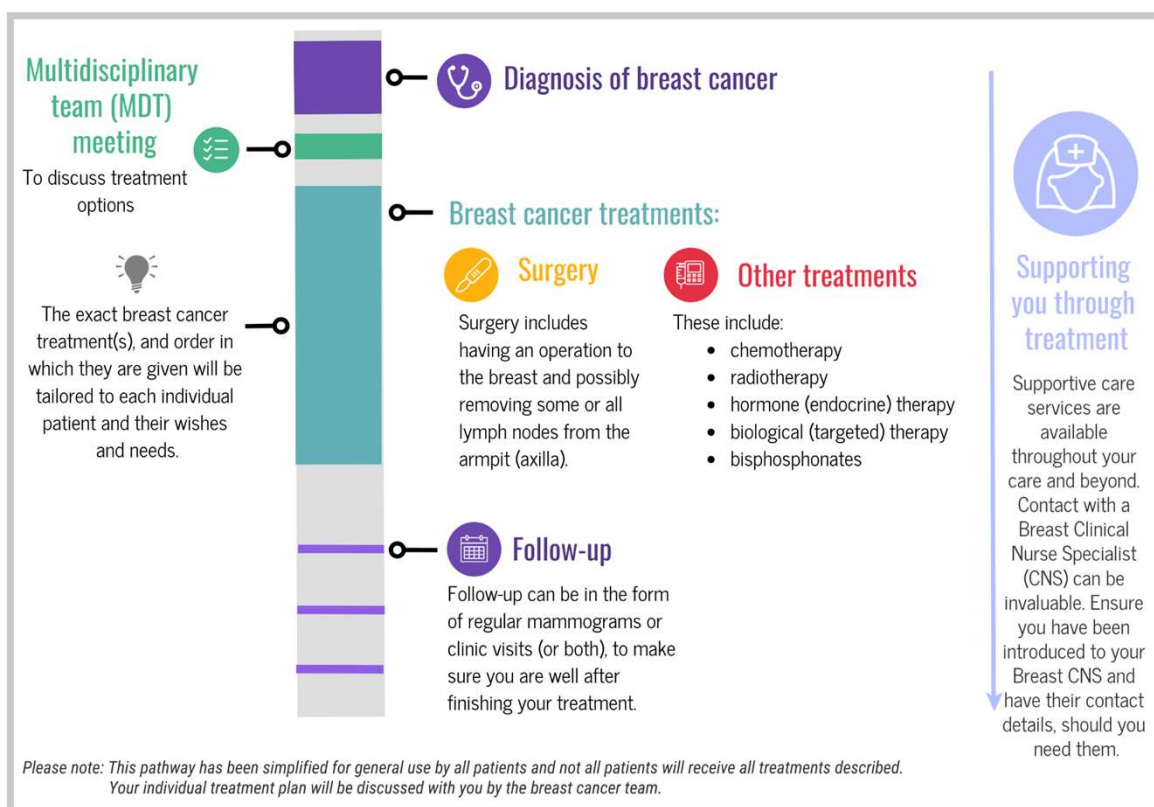


Suggestions for questions patients with a new diagnosis of breast cancer might ask their clinical team

- There are many separate elements in the treatment of breast cancer which patients may encounter for the first time.
- The National Audit of Primary Breast Cancer (NAoPri) was set up to determine if treatment for all patients (women and men across all ages) with primary breast cancer is consistent with recommended practice and to identify where there are differences between services.
- If you are a **patient** diagnosed with primary breast cancer, we hope this guide will be of help. We suggest to **use it with your clinical nurse specialist (CNS)** to talk about some important **topics throughout your care**.

The picture to the right shows the sequence of steps in a typical breast cancer pathway, from diagnosis to treatment, in English and Welsh hospitals.

Over the page you will find information on each of these steps in the pathway along with some prompts for questions you may find useful to ask.



Below you can write down any thoughts or questions you might have, as you go through the steps on the next page:

Find out more

❖ If you would like to know more about the NAOpri, please visit our FAQs page:

<https://www.natcan.org.uk/faqs/faqs-for-patients/>

❖ For more detailed information about breast cancer treatment please see the Breast Cancer Now website:

<https://breastcancernow.org/information-support/facing-breast-cancer/going-through-breast-cancer-treatment>

<https://breastcancernow.org/about-breast-cancer/diagnosis/questions-to-ask-about-your-breast-cancer>

This guide has been developed in collaboration with members of:



Diagnosis of breast cancer

When your breast cancer was diagnosed, you would have had a breast examination, imaging of your breasts, and a tissue sample or 'biopsy' taken. This is known as a "Triple Diagnostic Assessment".

If you are aged 70 years or older, a NABCOP Fitness Assessment Form should be completed for you to document your fitness and not base your management on your age alone.

The results from these investigations will be reviewed in a multidisciplinary team (MDT) meeting where specialists will discuss what treatments are available to treat your specific breast cancer.



Supporting you through treatment (& decision making)

Your breast care team are there to help and support you through your diagnosis and treatment. The questions to the right may help you to work through any concerns you may have before or during treatment.



Surgery

It is usual that there will be an operation on the breast to remove the cancer. Discuss with your team if you could have a partial excision (lumpectomy) or if you require mastectomy (removal of all breast tissue). Discuss the reasons. An operation which removes lymph nodes from the armpit is also common. Older women will also often proceed with surgery but, on occasion, may be advised hormonal (endocrine) treatment as an alternative.



(Neo) Adjuvant therapy

Adjuvant therapies are additional treatments to surgery which you may be offered for your breast cancer. Some might be offered *before* your surgery and are called 'neoadjuvant therapy'. You should discuss with your breast cancer team if this is an option for you.



Follow-up

Your breast unit will organise appropriate follow-up for you. This may be clinic appointments, telephone consultations or an open access service. The type of follow-up appointments and how often they are organised will depend on your hospital and what treatment(s) you received. After the 5 years of annual follow-up mammograms, if you are aged 71 and over you will not automatically be invited for breast screening. You can still have breast screening every 3 years if you want to. To make an appointment, call your local breast screening service.

Questions to ask your breast care team:

- What is the likely overall treatment plan for my breast cancer?
- Will I be sent copies of the letters that are sent to my GP?
- What size is my breast cancer, according to my test results?
- Has my cancer spread e.g. to the armpit nodes?
- How is my general health & fitness for treatment assessed?

The following features listed below should be recorded about your breast cancer. Ask your breast cancer team if these have been recorded in national cancer data for you:

- ✓ **Estrogen/progesterone receptor status**
- ✓ **HER2 status** (if you have invasive breast cancer)
- ✓ **Nodal stage** (spread to armpit lymph nodes)
- ✓ **Tumour grade**
- ✓ **Tumour size**
- ✓ **Information collected on your general health and fitness for receiving treatment**



Questions to ask your breast care team:

- What are my treatment options/do I have to have treatment?
- How will treatment affect my day-to-day activities?
- Are there any clinical trials which I could consider?
- What support is available for me if I am a carer for others?
- Who can I talk to for help with my mental health?
- Is there any financial support available for me?

Questions to ask your breast surgeon:

- How can I prepare myself physically & mentally for surgery?
- What are the pros & cons of having a lumpectomy over a mastectomy?
- Is breast reconstruction an option for me?
- How much pain and tenderness can I expect after surgery?
- What will the appearance look like after surgery?
- How do I get information regarding shoulder exercises?
- What can I do to help myself recover from surgery?
- What are the risks of needing another operation?

Questions to ask your breast oncologist:

- What treatment is best for my breast cancer?
- Am I suitable for chemotherapy, radiotherapy or any other treatments?
- Will the treatment be in the form of tablets, injections or...?
- When will my treatment start and how long will it last?
- What are the side effects of the treatment?
- How will I know if the treatment is working?

Questions to ask your breast care team:

- How often will you see me to check I'm ok?
- Where can I find support on adapting to life after breast cancer?
- What are the signs I should look out for of my breast cancer returning?

Questions to ask your breast care team, if your breast cancer has come back after treatment (you have a recurrence):

- What treatments are available for me?
- What support is available to me?
- Has information on my breast cancer recurrence been recorded in the national cancer data?