

Discharge from routine follow up for patients who have been treated for breast cancer

Breast Care Service Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet explains why you have been discharged from routine follow up and advises on how you can be referred back to the breast care team, if you have any concerns.

Discharge from routine follow up from hospital

It has been at least five years since you were treated for breast cancer. Since then, you have been reviewed yearly by the breast care surgical team. You have now completed the routine follow up period and will only be seen by the breast team at the hospital if you or your GP requests it.

Why have I been discharged from follow up?

In the past, patients have been followed up indefinitely after breast cancer surgery but research has indicated that this may not always be necessary (NICE, 2009).

Nowadays, most patients are discharged after five years of follow up except those who are under the age of 50 as these patients do not automatically receive NHS breast screening. These patients will remain in follow up until they reach the age of 50 and can access this service. Patients who are involved with clinical trials may also find that their length of hospital follow up may differ.

What happens about breast imaging?

Breast imaging includes mammograms, ultrasound imaging and MRI scans. You will have received yearly imaging for the last five years since you were last treated for breast cancer.

This will now stop and individual programmes of imaging will be recommended which are tailored to the type of problem you had, and your age in relation to the NHS breast screening programme. You should be informed of these arrangements when you are discharged from routine follow up.

If you have any queries about your breast imaging appointments, please contact the main X-ray department at Russells Hall Hospital on 01384 456111 ext. 2327 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday).

If your appointment is with the NHS Breast Screening Programme, please contact the Breast Screening Department on 01384 244177 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday).

Will I need any other tests?

No, unless you are referred back to us by your GP because you have unusual symptoms (please see section on 'How can I become breast aware?').

What do I need to do about medication?

We will let you know whether you need to continue or stop any current medication.

What happens if I am on a clinical trial?

If you have agreed to participate in a clinical trial, you may be asked to attend for review more frequently or for a longer period of time. This is in order to answer the questions that the trial was set up to answer. This does not mean that we are more concerned about your wellbeing than anyone who is not in a clinical trial.

Are there any late side effects of treatment that I need to know about?

Yes. There are always late side effects that you may develop many months and years after treatment has finished. Here are the two main ones:

Lymphoedema

If you had some lymph glands removed at the time of your breast surgery, you may develop lymphoedema. This can be caused by a lack of drainage in the area where the lymph glands were removed and may lead to swelling in your breast, axilla, arm, hand and/or chest wall. If you think this is happening, please contact your GP or one of the breast care nurses.

Care in the sun

If you received radiotherapy as part of your treatment, your skin in the treated area will be more sensitive, so you should take care to protect it from the sun.

We recommend that you use a high factor sun protection cream or lotion in the sun and keep covered where possible. It is important to remember that you can get sunburnt through clothing if the temperature is hot and you are exposed to the sun for a long time.

Will the cancer come back?

For many women, their breast cancer will not come back after treatment and they will lead a normal life without any cancer-related problems.

However, cancer can be complicated and it is different in everyone. You will experience coughs and colds and aches and pains like anyone but this does not mean the cancer has returned. If problems do occur, they are usually noticed by the person themselves.

For this reason, we would recommend that you examine yourself once a month paying particular attention to your breast(s), armpits, along the scar line and above your collar bone. If you require more information on how to examine yourself, please ask your breast care nurse who will be happy to show you.

How can I become breast aware?

Breast awareness is an important part of caring for yourself. Being breast aware is about becoming familiar with your breasts and the way they change throughout your life. By being familiar with how your breasts look and feel, it will help you realise if anything is different, new or unusual.

To help you with this, Breast Cancer Care has a comprehensive guide to breast awareness called 'Know your breasts – A guide to breast awareness and screening'. You can get a copy of this from your breast care nurses or you can order it directly from Breast Cancer Care. They also provide this information in a DVD and in other languages.

Breast Cancer Care says the changes to be aware of are:

- A change in size or shape – it may be that one of your breasts has become noticeably larger or lower
- Swelling of the breast(s)
- A swelling or lump under your armpit or above your collar bone (where the lymph nodes are)
- A lump or a thickening in your breast or armpit that feels different from the rest of your breast
- Irritation, rash, puckering or dimpling of the skin
- Discharge other than breast milk coming from one or both breasts
- Nipple abnormalities such as pain, rash, redness, scaling or inversion
- Constant pain in one part of the breast or armpit

Listed below are some of other signs and symptoms to look out for:

- Any changes in your scar line such as a rash or new spots
- Unexplained vaginal bleeding
- Menopausal symptoms
- Persistent back or bone pain
- Unexplained weight loss, sickness or poor appetite
- Unexplained tingling in the either or both legs, feet and hands
- Unexplained shortness of breath or a persistent cough
- Frequent or persistent headaches
- Any unexplained new pain in your body

What do I do if I find one of these symptoms?

Report anything unusual to your GP without delay. Most of these symptoms will turn out to be nothing serious and your GP may tell you this, or they may wish to refer you to a breast clinic for further assessment.

Exercise and healthy living

There is good quality evidence that regular exercise may reduce the risk of cancer coming back in some women, and that moderate exercise improves quality of life in a vast majority of women.

It is recommended that women should walk for half an hour a day five days a week at a medium pace (a pace that makes you mildly out of breath but you can still hold a conversation). However, other forms of exercise are also beneficial.

More information regarding exercise and healthy living is available on the Breast Cancer Care website or ask your breast care nurse.

Acknowledgements: University Hospitals of North Midlands, The Dudley Group Breast Care Nursing Team, Breast Cancer Care and Professor Carmichael.

How do I contact the breast care nurses?

Either you or your GP can contact the breast care nurses on:

01384 244065 (8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

Please note that if the nurses are with other patients, they may not answer the phone. In this case, it is best to leave a message on the answer machine. They can also be paged if you contact the main hospital switchboard on 01384 456111 (ask the operator to page one of the breast care nurses).

The breast care nurses do not work at the weekend but the answer machine is on 24 hours a day, seven days a week and if you leave a message, they will contact you as soon as possible.

When you speak to a breast care nurse, they may want to see you or they may refer you to another healthcare professional such as your GP, an oncologist (cancer specialist), a surgeon or a lymphoedema specialist.

If you or your GP are concerned about a symptom, your GP can refer you to the breast clinic and we will see you very quickly, usually within two weeks.

What do I need to tell other healthcare professionals?

If you need to see another healthcare professional, for example, a physiotherapist, osteopath or dentist, it is advisable to inform them that you have been treated for breast cancer and tell them about any medication you are on.

What services are available to me?

Breast screening

The NHS breast screening programme in England invites women for screening every three years from age 50 years up to age 70, as long as they are registered with a GP. They are currently trialling extending this from the age of 47 up to 73, in some areas.

Once you are 70 we recommend that you ring the Breast Screening Department on 01384 244177 every three years to arrange for a screening test.

Breast prosthesis

If you have any queries about your breast prosthesis, or need a replacement, please contact the breast care nurses on:

01384 244065

A replacement prosthesis is available every two to three years depending on the manufacturer's guarantee, or if you have had a significant weight gain or loss within that time.

What other services are available in my area?

Health and Wellbeing Events

Meetings are held every month at Russells Hall Hospital.

Please contact the breast care nurses on 01384 244065

The White House Cancer Support

The White House, 10 Ednam Road, Dudley DY1 1JX

01384 231232

info@support4cancer.org.uk

www.support4cancer.org.uk

The White House Cancer Support is a registered charity which provides practical help and emotional support to people with cancer, their families, friends and carers.

They offer transport, one-to-one counselling, a cancer care helpline, a cancer information centre, complementary therapies, home and hospital visits, social activities and they have a range of support groups for specific cancers.

The breast cancer care group meet at the Whitehouse on the second Tuesday of the month at 2pm.

Rainbow breast reconstruction group:

Meets on the third Thursday of every month at 10.30am. Meetings are held at The White House, 10 Ednam Road, Dudley DY1 1JX.

St Agatha's breast support group:

Meets on the first Thursday in the month 10am to 12noon. Meetings are held at Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Priory Road, Dudley DY1 1HF.

Dudley breast cancer support group:

Meets on the second Monday in the month 6.45pm to 8.30pm.
Meetings are held at Customer Services Centre, Merry Hill Shopping Centre, Brierley Hill, West Midlands DY5 1QX.

Breast Cancer Haven:

This is a charity offering a free programme of care for breast cancer patients. The nearest centre is in Hereford.

01432 361061

Please ring the breast care nurses if you need any more information about these services.

Where else can I get information?

Breast Cancer Now:

0333 20 70 300

[Breast cancer now](#)

Breast Cancer Care:

0808 800 6000

[Breast cancer care](#)

Macmillan Cancer Support:

0808 808 0000

[Macmillan Cancer Support](#)

British Lymphology Society:

01452 790178

[The British Lymphology Society](#)

Lymphoedema Support Network:

020 7351 4480

[Lymphoedema Support Network](#)

Cancer Research UK:

0808 800 4040

[Cancer Research UK](#)

Look Good Feel Better:

01372 747 500

[Look good feel better](#)

NHS Choices:

www.nhs.uk

Reference

NICE (2009) *Early and locally advanced breast cancer. Diagnosis and treatment*. NICE Clinical Guideline 80. [online] NICE. Available at: < <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg80> > [accessed 5 September 2017]

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Breast care nurses on 01384 244065 (8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/oncology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ، ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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