
Now what?

Anyone who's ever had breast cancer knows what it felt like hearing, "You have cancer." You may feel angry, afraid, overwhelmed and unsure about the future. These feelings are normal, but don't let them keep you from taking action.

Learn about breast cancer. Get information about treatment options, side effects and clinical trials. Doctors can present options, but you will make the final decision.

Knowing what to expect can help. Coping with breast cancer requires time, acceptance, a fighting spirit and support.

Types of support

There are three main types of support: informational, emotional and practical. You may need different kinds of support at different times. Your medical team, family and friends (co-survivors) can help in many ways. Be clear about what you need.

Informational support includes finding facts about your type of breast cancer or treatment options or talking to others on your behalf who have gone through breast cancer. For example, Susan G. Komen's breast care helpline 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) provides free support services to anyone with questions or concerns about breast cancer.

A social worker or counselor can help with a wide range of issues, including financial concerns.

Talk openly with your doctor. This will help you gain trust and confidence to work together as a team and make key treatment decisions.

Emotional support can include listening to you, giving you a hug or just being there when you need a friend.

Practical support can include rides to appointments, cooking or cleaning.

Benefits of support

- Reduced anxiety and psychological distress
- Reduced depression and feelings of pain
- Improved mood and/or self-image
- Improved ability to cope
- Improved feelings of control



Why you need support

We are each of us angels with only one wing. And we can only fly embracing each other.

~ Luciano de Crescenzo

No one should face breast cancer alone. Getting support is important to your well-being and can help you cope. Surround yourself with people who care about you. It can be hard to ask for help, even when you really need it. Your friends and family want to help.

Should you join a support group?

Support groups are a good resource. They can vary in their focus. Some groups mainly provide information and education, while others focus on providing emotional support. Some groups are led by professionals, while others are more informal and take place in churches or homes.

If you choose to join a support group, find one that is right for you. There are groups for people in different stages of illness or recovery and some are run by breast cancer survivors. Support groups are a commitment of time and energy and most who join agree it is worth it.

If you don't like the idea of sharing your thoughts or feelings in a support group, you may get comfort talking to a partner or friend. An online support group may also be an option.

CancerCare® offers online support groups for people who have cancer as well as for their partners and family members. Komen's Message Boards offer online forums for breast cancer survivors to share their experiences, advice and support.

The positive side

Having breast cancer may feel like the worst thing that can happen to you. Yet, there may be some good things you can take away. Many people say breast cancer has given them a renewed appreciation for life. Others have made new friendships, rekindled old ones and found an inner strength they didn't know they had. You may even decide to help others affected by breast cancer too. Contact your local Susan G. Komen Affiliate or your local hospital to see how you can get involved.

Resources

Susan G. Komen®
1-877-GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)
www.komen.org

American Cancer Society
1-800-ACS-2345
www.cancer.org

CancerCare®
1-800-813-HOPE
www.cancercare.org

Related fact sheet in this series:

- Making Breast Cancer Treatment Decisions

The above list of resources is only a suggested resource and is not a complete listing of breast cancer materials or information. The information contained herein is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional. Komen does not endorse, recommend or make any warranties or representations regarding the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, quality or non-infringement of any of the materials, products or information provided by the organizations referenced herein.