

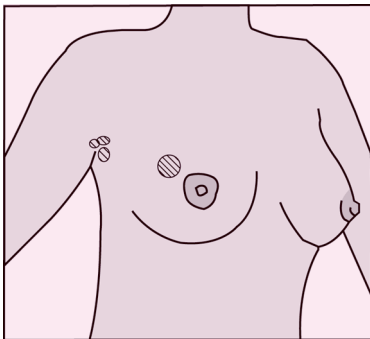
The goal of breast cancer surgery is to remove the whole tumor from the breast. Some lymph nodes from the underarm area (axillary nodes) may also be removed to check for cancer cells.

Besides surgery, treatment may also include radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy and/or targeted therapy. These treatments help kill any cancer that might still be in the body.

Types of breast cancer surgery

There are two types of breast cancer surgery: lumpectomy (breast conserving surgery) and mastectomy. Survival with lumpectomy plus radiation therapy is the same as with mastectomy.

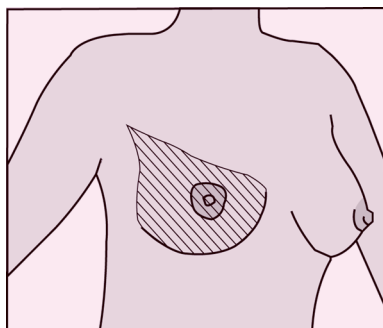
Lumpectomy:



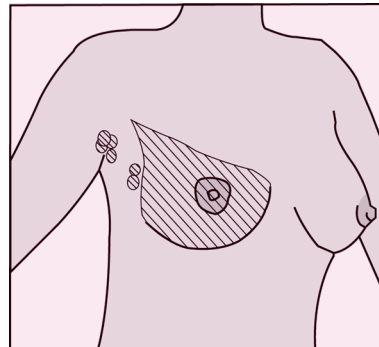
With a lumpectomy, the surgeon removes the tumor and a small rim of normal tissue around it. The rest of the breast remains intact. Lumpectomy is almost always followed by radiation therapy.

Mastectomy:

With a mastectomy, the whole breast is removed. In some cases, radiation therapy may be given after mastectomy.



Total mastectomy: The surgeon removes the whole breast and the lining of the chest muscle, but no other tissue.



Modified radical mastectomy:

The surgeon removes the whole breast, the lining of the chest muscle and some of the axillary lymph nodes.

Skin-sparing mastectomy and nipple-sparing mastectomy

If you are having breast reconstruction at the same time as a mastectomy, the surgeon may be able to use a skin-sparing or a nipple-sparing technique.

A skin-sparing mastectomy saves as much of the skin of the breast as possible. The plastic surgeon can use this skin to help form the reconstructed breast. A nipple-sparing mastectomy is a skin-sparing mastectomy that also keeps the nipple and areola (darkly shaded circle of skin around the nipple) intact.

How do I find a breast surgeon?

Ask your doctor to suggest a few surgeons (and if you are getting breast reconstruction, a few plastic surgeons). Choose one who does a lot of breast cancer surgery (or for a plastic surgeon, a lot of breast reconstruction), if possible. Your hospital or health insurance plan may have a directory of surgeons that list their education, training and certifications.

Which surgery is best for you?

- Ask your surgeon (and plastic surgeon) which options are best for you and why. You may want to get a second opinion.
- Think about which option is best for you. For example, if you cannot drive every day to radiation therapy (which is needed with a lumpectomy), then a lumpectomy may not be the best choice for you.

What to expect after surgery

Before surgery, ask your doctor what you might expect afterwards, such as:

- Risk of infection, bleeding or slow healing of the wound.
- Short-term side effects, such as soreness in your chest, underarm and shoulder.
- Scars in the breast and underarm area.
- Changes in the size and shape of the breast.

With a lumpectomy, you are likely to have numbness along the surgical incision (scar).

With a mastectomy, you will be numb across your chest (from your collarbone to the top of your rib cage). This numbness may not go away.

If axillary lymph nodes will be removed, you may have some numbness in your arm. You may also be at risk of lymphedema. Lymphedema is a condition where fluid collects in the arm (or other area such as the hand, fingers, chest or back), causing it to swell.

Talk with your doctor about other long-term effects. Get back to your normal routine when you are ready and as approved by your doctor.

You are not alone

There are many people who have been where you are today. They had the same fears and made the same tough choices. These people have gone through surgery and recovered. They can talk with you and answer questions.

You can find support from other people diagnosed with breast cancer on the Komen Message Boards on komen.org. Or, ask a member of your health care team (doctors, nurses or social workers) where to find a support group. You may also be able to find a support group online.

The Susan G. Komen® Breast Care Helpline provides support, information and resources to anyone with breast cancer questions or concerns. All calls to the helpline are answered by a trained and caring staff member Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. ET.

Resources

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

American Cancer Society — Reach to Recovery
1-800-ACS-2345 www.cancer.org

American Society of Breast Surgeons
1-877-992-5470 www.breastsurgeons.org

American Society of Plastic Surgeons
1-847-228-9900 www.plasticsurgery.org

Related fact sheets in this series:

- Axillary Lymph Nodes
- Breast Reconstruction & Prosthesis After Mastectomy
- 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.