

## You know yourself best

No one knows more about your body than you do. Not your partner, not your family, not even your doctor. When you talk with health care providers about your health, remember you have important information they can use. You know about changes in your body and about any problems you are having. Share that information. Open and honest communication between you and your doctor is one of the best ways to make sure you get the care you need.



## It really is all about you

While you may be overwhelmed, it is still important to get the most out of each doctor's visit. Try these tips:

### 1. Be prepared.

Gather information about your health concerns — from the library (books and medical journals), trusted websites or fact sheets like this one. The more you know, the more comfortable you will be talking with your doctor.

### 2. Organize your questions ahead of time.

You should be able to talk openly and honestly with your doctor about breast cancer to make sure all of your questions are answered. To help you get started, Susan G. Komen® has a series of *Questions to Ask the Doctor*. Topics include: *Breast Cancer Surgery, Radiation Therapy and Chemotherapy and Side Effects*.

You can download these questions at [www.komen.org/questions](http://www.komen.org/questions) and print them to take to your doctor's appointment. These questions can help your doctor understand and address your specific concerns.

You may want to take someone with you to discuss what you heard later. Or, you may want to take some type of voice recorder to capture your conversation so you can listen to it later.

### 3. Tell your story.

When your doctor comes in, ask if you can take a few minutes to briefly explain your situation and concerns. Be as specific as you can. Then give the doctor your list of questions and ask them.

### 4. Give feedback.

If your doctor's responses were helpful, say so. This kind of feedback will encourage your doctor to talk with you, listen to you and continue to help you.

## Stay in control

If you have just been diagnosed with breast cancer, your doctor may be talking about treatment options. Take your time. This is your life and your body. You have time to make a treatment decision or even get a second opinion.

If you need time to process all this information, ask for it. You have every right to take the time you need to deal with your emotions and learn more. Waiting to make a treatment decision for one day or even a couple of weeks rarely makes a difference between a good and bad outcome.

## Communication

Doctors are just like anyone else; they want to do their job well. That means doing whatever they can to help you get better. Remember, doctors may know a great deal about breast cancer, but they may not truly understand or be aware of what you are going through. Share your feelings and concerns with your doctor so they can help.



## Resources

Susan G. Komen® — For information and support, call 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons — offers information on cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgery procedures and a plastic surgeon referral service. [www.plasticsurgery.org](http://www.plasticsurgery.org)

CancerCare® — provides free, professional support services for anyone affected by cancer. 1-800-813-HOPE (4673) [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service — provides information and resources for patients, the public and health care providers. 1-800-4-CANCER (422-6237) [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

The Komen message boards offer online forums for breast cancer survivors to share their experiences and advice with other survivors. <https://apps.komen.org/Forums/>

### Related fact sheets in this series:

- Complementary and Integrative Therapies
- Follow-up after Breast Cancer Treatment
- 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.