جمعية زهرة
ZAHRA ASSOCIATION

Your Steps to Wellness:
Campaign Guide



What Happens After Diagnosis?

If an initial screening (such as a mammogram) shows something abnormal, your doctor will request additional tests to determine its nature. You may be referred to a specialist, but this does not necessarily mean you have cancer.

Common tests include:

- **Breast Ultrasound:** Uses sound waves to create precise images of the breast to evaluate lumps and cysts.
- **Diagnostic Mammogram:** A more detailed X-ray image of the breast.
- **MRI**: Produces detailed images using magnets and a computer.
- **Biopsy:** A small tissue sample is taken using a special needle and examined under a microscope. This procedure is usually performed in the Radiology Department.

A biopsy is the only way to confirm the presence of cancer.

From Diagnosis to Treatment

If breast cancer is confirmed, your care team will evaluate your condition, determine the type and grade, and discuss treatment options with you. The treatment plan is not fixed; each patient has a unique treatment plan tailored specifically for them.

How is treatment chosen?

The treatment plan depends on several important factors:

1. Cancer Stage

Describes the amount of cancer in the body and whether it has spread. This guides treatment decisions and provides an idea of the prognosis.

2. Tumor Type

- Malignant (Cancerous): Can grow and spread.
- Benign (Non-cancerous): Does not spread and is usually not life-threatening.

3. Biological (Molecular) Characteristics

- Tumors are divided into subtypes determined by:
- Hormone Receptor (HR) status: Checking cells to see how they respond to hormone therapy.
- HER2 Protein status: A protein test to determine growth speed and response to targeted therapy.
- Triple-Negative status: In this case, certain types of treatment are ruled out.

4. The Patient's General Health

Certain health conditions may limit available treatment options (e.g., a history of prior radiation). Your doctor will explain the meaning of each of these factors and their impact on your treatment plan, and help you weigh the benefits and risks of each option.

Types of Treatment

Treatment varies by cancer type and stage. Here are the main options:

1. Surgery
Partial or total removal of the tumor (lumpectomy or mastectomy) depending on the case.

2. Chemotherapy
Uses drugs to destroy cancer cells or stop their growth. It can be given as pills or intravenously.

3. Radiation Therapy
Given over several sessions to target cancer cells while allowing healthy cells to recover. Usually performed as an outpatient procedure.

4. Hormone Therapy
Used for specific types of breast cancer that rely on hormones to grow.

5. Targeted / Immunotherapy
Focuses on specific characteristics of cancer cells or helps the immune system fight the cancer.

Surgical Options

The most suitable type of surgery depends on tumor size, cancer type, and personal preference. There are two main types:

1. Lumpectomy (Breast-Conserving Surgery)
Only the tumor and a small amount of surrounding tissue are removed, usually followed by radiation.

2. Mastectomy
The entire breast is removed. In this case, post-operative radiation may not be necessary.

Note: Reconstructive and plastic surgery options are compatible with both types of surgery, either during or after the procedure (except in certain cases).

Side Effects and What to Expect

Side effects can occur at different times:

- Before treatment: Anxiety and stress.
- During treatment: Fatigue, nausea, and hair loss.
- After treatment: Recovery and the potential for long-term effects.

Common Side Effects:

1. Fatigue
Very common. Plan your day based on energy levels and rest.

2. Hair Loss
May occur with chemotherapy. Some prepare by using wigs or headscarves.

3. Nausea & Digestion
Small, frequent meals and staying hydrated can help.

4. Skin Changes
Skin may become sensitive; use gentle products and protect it from the sun.

5. Weakened Immune System
You may catch infections more easily. Hygiene and avoiding sick people are vital.

6. Memory and concentration issues "Chemo Brain"
Staying organized and getting enough sleep helps.

When to contact your doctor?

- Fever or chills
- unusual bleeding/bruising
- severe/persistent fatigue
- any sharp change in health status

Most side effects improve after the end of treatment, but the recovery period varies from person to person.

Nutrition During Treatment

Nutrition plays a major role in maintaining strength.

During treatment your body may need more:

- Protein and calories
- Flexible eating patterns

Helpful Strategies:

- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Choose protein-rich foods.
- Drink fluids between meals.
- Use smoothies or supplements if eating is difficult.

Side effects such as nausea, dry mouth, or altered taste may affect eating, but these can be managed using the strategies above.

Note: If eating becomes very difficult, you can seek nutritional care and support.

Myths and Facts

Myth: Sugar makes cancer worse.
Fact: Sugar doesn't directly "feed" cancer cells, but excessive consumption contributes to obesity, which increases cancer risk.

Myth: Surgery or biopsy spreads cancer.
Fact: Studies show biopsies do not affect cancer outcomes; they are essential for diagnosis.

Myth: Herbal remedies can cure cancer.
Fact: No herbal product is proven to cure cancer, and some may interfere with medical treatment.

Myth: Mammograms cause cancer.
Fact: Mammograms are safe and do not cause or spread cancer.

Verify any health information and discuss any doubts about the treatment with your doctor.

Recovery and Moving Forward

Many people with breast cancer—especially when detected early—respond very well to treatment.

Self-Care:

- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat healthy to maintain strength.
- Stay physically active when possible.
- Stress management in ways that work for you.

Support is Important:

You are not alone. Support can come from your ...

- Medical team
- Family
- Friends
- Support groups

جمعية زهرة
ZAHRA ASSOCIATION

References :

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- National Cancer Institute
- Cleveland Clinic
- National Breast Cancer Foundation