

## So many words...

There are so many new words to learn after a breast cancer diagnosis. This fact sheet contains some of those words that you may hear. You can refer to this sheet whenever you do not understand something. You may want to take it with you to your doctor appointments. Or you can use it to look up words that you do not understand when reading about breast cancer.

### Adjuvant therapy

cancer treatment used after surgery, such as chemotherapy or hormone therapy

### Alternative therapy

any non-traditional treatment used *instead* of a standard medical cancer treatment

### Axillary lymph nodes

glands in the underarm that filter the lymph fluid

### Aromatase inhibitor

hormone therapy drug used to lower the amount of estrogen in the body, so the cancer cells cannot grow

### Benign

non-cancerous

### Biopsy

removal of tissue which is then examined under a microscope for cancer cells

### BRCA1 & BRCA2

inherited human genes which, when present in a mutated (altered) form, increase the risk of breast and/or ovarian cancer

### Chemotherapy

the use of drugs to treat cancer by killing cancer cells

### Clinical breast exam

inspection (looking) and palpation (feeling) of the breasts and underarm areas by a health care provider to check for any changes or lumps

### Clinical trials

controlled research studies done with people who volunteer to test the safety and potential benefits of new ways to detect, diagnose, treat or prevent disease

### Cyclical breast pain

tenderness that varies throughout the menstrual cycle, is influenced by hormones and is related to menstrual periods

### Cyst

fluid-filled sacs that are almost always benign

### Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS)

a non-invasive breast cancer commonly referred to as stage 0

### Estrogen

a hormone produced primarily by the ovaries that aids in developing female sex organs and in regulating monthly menstrual cycles

### Fibrocystic breast changes

non-cancerous breast condition that sometimes results in painful cysts or lumpy breasts

### Hormone therapy

drugs that work by interfering with the effects of hormones on cancer growth

### Integrative and complementary therapy

any non-traditional cancer treatment that is used *together* with standard medical cancer treatment

### **Invasive cancer**

the spread of cancer from the location where it started into surrounding tissue

### **Lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS)**

a risk factor for breast cancer

### **Lumpectomy (breast conserving surgery)**

surgery that removes only part of the breast — the breast cancer and some normal tissue around it

### **Lymphedema**

build-up of lymphatic fluid causing swelling due to removal of or injury to the lymph nodes

### **Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)**

test that creates an image of the breast, often used with mammography for screening women at a high risk of breast cancer

### **Malignant**

cancerous

### **Mammogram**

an X-ray of the breast; the best screening tool used today to find breast cancer early

### **Mastectomy**

surgery in which the entire breast is removed

### **Metastasis**

the spread of cancer from the breast to other parts of the body

### **Neoadjuvant therapy**

chemotherapy or hormone therapy given before surgery to reduce the size of a tumor

### **Oncologist**

a doctor who specializes in treating people with cancer

### **Palliative care**

the combination of symptom and pain management therapies intended to comfort and support those with a life-threatening illness

### **Postmenopausal hormones**

synthetic hormones used to relieve menopausal symptoms

### **Progesterone**

a hormone that is released by the ovaries during every menstrual cycle and that helps prepare a woman's body for pregnancy and breastfeeding

### **Progestin**

a synthetic progesterone-like ingredient found in postmenopausal hormone drugs

### **Prognosis**

the expected or probable outcome of a disease; chance of recovery

### **Prosthesis (breast)**

an artificial breast form that can be worn under clothing after a mastectomy

### **Radiation therapy (radiotherapy)**

treatment using high energy X-rays to destroy cancer cells in the exposed area

### **Receptor**

a specific location in a cancer cell that hormones attach to in order to promote growth

### **Reconstructive surgery**

a procedure using plastic surgery to recreate a breast

### **Recurrence**

a return of cancer in the same site or another location

### **Risk factors**

factors that increase a person's chances of getting breast cancer

### **Stages of cancer**

a numbering system (from 0 to 4) that indicates how advanced a breast cancer may be in order to determine outcome and treatment options

### **Targeted therapy**

treatment that works by going to the genes and proteins in cancer cells to stop their growth and spread

### **Tumor**

an abnormal growth or mass of tissue which may be benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous)