



Follow-up Care After Breast Cancer

Physical Exams:

After breast cancer surgery, your doctor will want to see you at regular intervals. For the first few years, it is common to have regular exams every 3 to 6 months. Then, exams are usually cut back to once or twice a year as long as no cancer cells have formed in the original site or elsewhere in the body. These exams are continued for life.

Your doctor will perform a physical exam of the incision site(s), remaining breast tissue, chest area, underarms, and neck to check for any new lumps or swollen lymph nodes. Other periodic tests such as chest x-rays, blood tests, or bone scans may be done to check for *metastasis* (the spread of cancer to other parts of the body). In addition, your doctor will tell you how often you should have a mammogram.

Breast Self-Exam:

After you have had breast surgery, you should continue to practice breast self-exam once a month on both sides. Pay close attention to what your scar feels like. Inspect your scar for new swelling, lumps, redness or color change. If you find anything unusual, contact your doctor.

For women who have gone through menopause, the exam should be done on the same day each month. For women who have gone through menopause, the exam should be done on the same day each month. For women who are still menstruating, the exam should be done 7 to 10 days after the end of the menstrual period, when the breasts are less tender.

General Health:

It is important to do everything you can to promote general good health:

- Eat a nutritious diet that is low in saturated fat and high in fiber.
- Limit your alcohol intake.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Exercise as recommended by your doctor.
- If you smoke, you need to quit.