

Note:

4. Supportive Care

Breast cancer treatment may be associated with side effects. Certain side effects such as nausea and hair loss are temporary while others may last longer. Physical changes, especially after breast surgery, may affect your confidence and how you feel about yourself. Chemotherapy and hormone therapy can alter your hormone levels and may affect your sexual life. You may have concerns about disruption to your work and family routines. At times you may feel lonely and experience difficulty relating to your loved ones.

Regardless of the changes you may be experiencing, there are resources and support available to help you cope.

- Speak to your doctor/nurse about your concerns.
- Maintain a well-balanced diet. It is not necessary to restrict your diet unless advised by your doctor/nurse.
- Continue physical/leisure activities as tolerated. Find out more about our exercise programmes and activities from any of our nurses.
- Pace your activities and allow adequate rest.
- Talk to your loved ones and allow them to help you when needed.

Often, it is helpful and comforting to talk to other young women who had similar experiences and have completed breast cancer treatment. Your nurse can connect you with a support group or a fellow breast cancer survivor when you feel ready.



- 1 National University Cancer Institute Singapore
- 2 National University Heart Centre Singapore
- 3 Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Institute (NUHkids) (via Kent Ridge Wing Level 2)
- Kent Ridge MRT Station @ Level 1
- Linkway @ Level 1 via MRT station (Exit A)
- Linkway @ Level 1
- Linkway @ Level 4
- Linkway @ Level 1
- Linkway @ Level 2
- Taxi Stand / Drop-Off
- Drop-off Point
- Bus Stop
- Carpark

Breast Care Centre

NUH Medical Centre Level 8
Appointment Line: (65) 6772 2002
Email: breast_surgery@nuhs.edu.sg

Nearest MRT Station: Kent Ridge (Circle Line)

National University Hospital

5 Lower Kent Ridge Road, Singapore 119074
Tel: (65) 6779 5555
Website: www.nuh.com.sg
Company Registration No. 198500843R

Information is correct at time of printing (September 2020) and subject to revision without prior notice.

The information provided in this publication is meant purely for educational purposes and may not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. You should seek the advice of your doctor or a qualified healthcare provider before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical conditions.

Battling Young Breast Cancer



Breast cancer usually affects middle-aged and older women. A diagnosis of breast cancer in young women often presents with its own unique set of challenges. You may not know much about breast cancer, and may feel unprepared to participate in decisions about your treatment. You may be juggling new roles and responsibilities in your life, and the diagnosis may disrupt some of your life plans. It is normal to feel shocked, angry, worried, frightened and a loss of control.

At the National University Hospital (NUH) and National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS), we recognise the unique challenges faced by young women like yourself, and are committed to support you and your loved ones during this journey. Your care team may include:

- **Breast Surgeons**
- **Plastic Surgeons** – Doctors who specialise in reconstructive surgery.
- **Medical Oncologists** – Doctors who specialise in treating cancer with chemotherapy, hormone therapy and biological therapy.
- **Radiation Oncologists** – Doctors who specialise in treating cancer with radiotherapy.
- **Clinical Geneticists** – Doctors with specialist training in diagnosing and treating genetic conditions.
- **Fertility Specialists** – Doctors with specialist training in treating reproductive and fertility conditions.
- **Psychiatrists**
- **Psychologists**
- **Medical Social Workers**
- **Physiotherapists**
- **Dietitians**
- **Breast Care Nurses**
- **Nurse Navigators**



The following care path illustrates the key components in your treatment plan.

1. Diagnostic Investigations

Apart from the initial investigations, your doctor may recommend one or more of the following investigations to determine the extent of the disease and plan your treatment accordingly:

- Mammogram
- Ultrasound
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)
- Computed Tomography (CT) scan of the chest and abdomen
- Bone scan
- Others: _____

2. Treatment Options

The approach to treatment often involves a combination of the following therapies. Depending on the stage of your breast cancer and several other factors, our team of specialists will discuss the most appropriate treatment plan for you. Surgery is one of the main treatments for breast cancer. It aims to:

- Remove the cancerous cells to stop its spread
- Reduce the risk of cancer recurrence
- Provide information to aid in decision-making of further treatment

Surgery may involve the removal of cancer cells and some of the normal looking tissues around it (breast conserving surgery), or the removal of the whole breast (mastectomy). A new breast shape can be reconstructed using implants and/or your own tissue immediately or a few years later.

Besides breast cancer surgery, you may be offered the following additional treatment(s) to reduce the risk of cancer recurrence.

- **Chemotherapy:** Use of anti-cancer drugs to destroy cancer cells which can be given before surgery (neoadjuvant) or after surgery (adjuvant).
- **Radiotherapy:** Use of radiation to destroy cancer cells.

- **Hormone Therapy:** Reduction of hormonal levels within the body to prevent cancer recurrence.
- **Anti-HER2 Therapy:** Use of antibodies (proteins) which target HER2 receptors on breast cancer cells to control their growth e.g. Herceptin.

Chemotherapy may result in an earlier onset of menopause and affect your chances of becoming pregnant in the future. If having children of your own is important to you, your doctor can refer you to a fertility specialist to discuss the options for fertility preservation. This should be done before your treatment starts.

Having breast cancer at a younger age may at times be due to an underlying faulty copy of a breast cancer protection gene, which results in a higher risk of breast cancer. Depending on your family history and certain features of your breast cancer, you may be referred to the Cancer Genetics Clinic to find out more about your risk and if you should consider genetic testing. Results of the genetic test may be helpful in guiding your decision regarding surgery and treatment.

3. Treatment Plan

Treatment	Duration	Timeline
<input type="checkbox"/> Surgery	Recovery takes approximately 2 weeks	
<input type="checkbox"/> Chemotherapy	Treatment takes approximately 3 - 6 months	
<input type="checkbox"/> Radiotherapy	Treatment takes approximately 6 weeks	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hormone Therapy	Treatment takes 5 years	
<input type="checkbox"/> Anti-HER2 Therapy	Treatment takes approximately 12 months	