

You have breast cancer, now what?

Hearing the words “you have breast cancer” will literally stop you in your tracks. It can be overwhelming, confusing and downright emotional. It’s important to take a deep breath, clear your mind of all the negative thoughts and focus on getting well again.

“I advise all of my patients to take a step back and remember that knowledge is power. The more you know about your disease and treatment options, the better you will feel about your decisions and be equipped with the tools you need to fight your disease,” says Dr. Gale England, an Advocate Medical Group breast surgeon at Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, IL.

Gain a better understanding of your stage of cancer. Sit down with your doctor and go over the pathology report together. This will provide important information so that you can make the best decisions for your recovery, such as:

- Type and aggressiveness (grade) of the cancer
- If it’s invasive
- If it’s spread to the lymph nodes or other organs
- Hormone-receptor status
- Develop a treatment plan. Your doctor may suggest several treatment options from local therapy, such as surgery, to systemic therapy, such as chemotherapy. Ask questions about the risks and benefits of each option. Consider each option carefully.

Dr. England suggests women consider a second opinion. “A second opinion can confirm the diagnosis and help you make a decision about treatment options. Some centers may even have different treatment options that could be beneficial to your treatment plan,” says England.

Assemble a support team. Remember that you are not alone. Your spouse, parents, family members and friends want to support you throughout this journey. Consider joining a support team at your treatment facility so you can get all of your questions answered along the way.

Finally, receive the support and care of your faith community. We are often reluctant to share what we are going through or to ask for help. Prayer, practical help, periodic check-ins from congregation members, or talking with your faith leader will connect you with God and feed your spirit for the journey of healing.

Wishing you joy and good health,
Mary Bohlen RN
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Blood pressure readings have resumed. See us in the Infant & Toddler Room in the rear of church on the 1st and 3rd full weekends of every month September – May. The service is free of charge and currently is limited to those Masses that have a volunteer to perform readings. If you are trained in taking blood pressures and would like to offer your services, please contact Mary Bohlen using the e-mail address listed above we’d love to have you on the team!