

# Your breast cancer treatment plan

## Open access follow-up

North Devon Breast Unit

### Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

### Follow-up appointments and mammogram arrangements

Your follow-up and the time between appointments will depend on your individual needs and on the arrangements at the hospital you are being treated in.

### End of treatment appointment

After you have finished your initial treatment, an appointment will be made for you to see your breast care nurse to check that you are well and recovering as expected. You will be invited to an end of treatment appointment with the breast care nurses approximately 6 months after you have completed your treatment. Most of the information given to you at this appointment will not be new to you but a reminder of things that have already been discussed. It will usually last about 30 minutes and it is often useful to bring a family member or friend with you.

After this appointment you will not need any routine appointments to see your surgeon. However, you remain under the care of the breast team for the duration of your follow-up mammograms and can contact us directly if you have any concerns to organise an appointment if appropriate.

Important information at this appointment includes:

- Your diagnosis
- Your treatment plan
- Breast awareness
- Planned follow-up
- What to report to the breast care nurses
- How to access a clinic appointment via open access follow-up
- Common problems after diagnosis and treatment
- Getting further help and support

## After the five years

**If you are younger than 50** when diagnosed, you will be given a yearly mammogram at NDDH until the age of 50 is reached.

**If you are over the age of 50**, you will be invited to have three-yearly mammograms up to the age of 73 as part of the NHS breast screening programme.

**If you are over the age of 73**, you are still eligible to be screened by request. This can be arranged by contacting the local NHS breast screening programme on 01392 262600 or through your GP.

## Who to contact if you have a concern

### During follow-up

Many patients find that speaking to their breast care nurse can be an easy way to discuss any concerns. They may organise an earlier appointment if you both feel you need to see the specialist sooner.

If you have any new symptoms you are worried about, you can see your GP between appointments for advice. If they feel it is necessary, they can refer you back to hospital for an earlier appointment.

### After your five-year follow-up

In the UK the survival of people with breast cancer has improved greatly over the past decade and many will have no further problems after they finish their treatment.

If you have had no further problems, you will be discharged from hospital follow-up appointments. After you have been discharged from follow-up appointments, your GP will be your main contact to get concerns checked quickly.

If you have any concerns, see your GP. Make sure they know about your breast cancer, particularly if you were diagnosed some time before, or if you have a new GP. If you feel you need to be seen in clinic again, your GP can arrange this quickly for you, or alternatively you could contact your breast care nurse at the hospital directly.

## Symptoms you may want to report

Always remember that everyone can get coughs, colds, aches and pains, and stomach upsets, but this does not necessarily mean that your cancer has come back.

If you have any of the following symptoms that persist or are getting worse, please contact your breast care nurse who will advise whether you need to be seen in the hospital or by your GP.

- Pain in the back or hips that does not improve with painkillers and which is often worse at night
- Unexplained weight loss and a loss of appetite
- A constant feeling of nausea
- Discomfort or swelling under the ribs or across the upper abdomen

- Feeling constantly tired
- A dry cough or a feeling of breathlessness
- Severe headaches, usually worse in the mornings
- Any new lumps or swellings, particularly in the area of your previous surgery, or in the neck area

## Long-term side-effects of breast cancer treatment

Some breast cancer treatments can cause temporary side-effects that stop soon after treatment finishes. However, your treatment may also cause longer-term side-effects.

Some common side-effects include:

- Menopausal symptoms
- Hair regrowth after chemotherapy
- Pain
- Fatigue and sleep problems
- Lymphoedema
- Osteoporosis
- Effects on fertility

To find out more about the possible side-effects of your treatment and how best to manage them, please see the individual treatment information booklets or contact the breast care nurses who can signpost you to the appropriate help and advice.

## Who to contact

We understand that breast cancer can affect you in many ways and will affect people differently. We hope that you find the above list of symptoms a useful guide for when to seek further advice. However if you need psychological support or someone to talk to, we are also here to support you through this.

For symptoms, support or medication problems:

Breast care nurses (Karen Hillman, Claire Herlihy and Amy Barrow) Tel: 01271 349115

For appointments and mammogram results:

Tel: 01271 322422

## Useful links

Macmillan Cancer Support

Website: [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

Tel: 0808 808 0000

Breast Cancer Care

Website: [www.breastcancercare.org.uk/](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk/)

Tel: 0808 800 6000

Cancer Advice

Website: [www.canceradvice.co.uk](http://www.canceradvice.co.uk)

## **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

## **Have your say**

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

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