

Can I ask for a second opinion?

If you would like a second opinion at any stage, discuss this with your General Practitioner and request a referral to another surgeon or consultant.

Remember that your outcome should not be effected by the time taken to seek a second opinion.

Other Support Resources.

The Breast Cancer Helpline **131120** (9am-4pm) has trained nurses who will talk to you about your proposed treatment and may be able to provide you with more information. They can also put you in touch with a trained volunteer who has been through a similar experience.

Acknowledgments.

- **All about early breast cancer** (1996). NHMRC National Breast Cancer Centre.
- **Breast Cancer Care *Making a diagnosis - Breast problems and breast cancer.*** Information & Support when you need it (UK).
- **Breast Cancer Care *Treating breast cancer.*** Information - Support when you need it (UK).
- **Caring for people with cancer *Understanding breast cancer*** Cancer Information Service (Irish Cancer Society).
- <http://www.nbcc.org.au>

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Making decisions about treatment:

A guide for women with breast cancer.

- How do I choose a Surgeon?
- What are my treatment options?
- Is support available when making treatment choices?
- Planning treatment.
- Can I ask for a second opinion?
- Other support resources.

*You should receive the book,
'All about early breast cancer'
to read in conjunction with this pamphlet.*

Hearing the news that you have breast cancer can be an unsettling time. It is normal to feel concerned and you may have many questions to ask. This pamphlet is designed to help you to make the treatment decision which is right for you.

How do I choose a surgeon?

When choosing your surgeon you may wish to ask if he / she is someone who regularly treats women with breast cancer. You may also consider the personal manner and approach of the surgeon and how accessible the surgeon will be. Your final choice should be a surgeon with whom you feel comfortable and can communicate with.

When visiting your surgeon you may wish to have a support person present, for example, a family member, friend or Breast Care Nurse.

Before you visit you may find it helpful to write down some questions such as:

- Why has a particular treatment been recommended?
- What are the alternatives?
- Are there any side effects to the treatment? If so, what are they?
- What are the long term implications for me?

Ask your support person or the surgeon to write down the main points that you need to remember.

Questions may also be asked during follow-up consultations or discussed with your Breast Care Nurse.

What are my treatment options?

Treatment options will depend on the type and location of the cancer in your breast, and will be tailored to your individual circumstances.

Your surgeon will explain your treatment options which may include: *surgery, radiotherapy, hormone therapy and chemotherapy*. These options can be used alone, or in a combination, to treat breast cancer. (Refer to the book 'All about early breast cancer' for detailed information about treatment options).

Is support available when making treatment choices?

Ask your surgeon to refer you to a **Breast Care Nurse**.

The Breast Care Nurse will support both you and your family in making an informed treatment decision relating to your needs and family circumstances.

The Breast Care Nurse will also:

- reinforce and discuss information provided by the surgeon
- provide you with access to further information as required
- offer both practical and emotional support, and
- provide referrals to other support services where indicated.

You should have as much time as you need to make a decision about your treatment. A few extra days will make **no difference** to your recovery.

Planning Treatment.

Treatment decisions depend on many factors and are tailored to the individual.

Treatment planning may involve your surgeon, oncologist and radiotherapist.

It is not always possible to plan treatment in one visit.

You should receive information about:

- the types of surgery available (including breast reconstruction where appropriate)
- information about recommended medical treatments (including radiotherapy and chemotherapy)
- a full explanation about the aims of the planned treatment, the benefits and possible side effects, and
- appropriate written information.