

BODY IMAGE

Coping with Feelings after Breast Cancer Treatment

Coping with breast cancer can be very difficult. Breast cancer treatment often brings unwanted changes to the body, such as loss of hair or breast. These changes can strongly affect how you feel about your body – you may feel like you have lost a part of yourself or no longer feel attractive. Studies show that how you feel about your body can affect your ability to cope with cancer. There are things you can do to feel better about your body and yourself.

Feeling Better About Your Body

- **Think positive.** Accept the changes to your body. Learn the benefits of your treatment and maintain a focus on healthy living.
- **Rest and de-stress.** Get enough rest when you feel tired. It is okay to ask for help when you feel weak. Talk to your doctor if you are worried that you are too stressed, sleeping too little or too much.



Feeling Better About Your Body

- **Eat healthy and exercise.** Try to eat a variety of healthy foods to boost your appetite and get enough nutrition. Start or get back into doing exercise to help your recovery.
- **Try new clothes or makeup** that help you feel and look more attractive.
- **Adjust to hair loss** in a way that feels comfortable for you. Try a wig or wear a hat, scarf, or stay bald. Find your own way to look and feel good.
- **Telling your loved one or social worker about your feelings** is not a sign of weakness. Being open with your feelings can help you cope.

Breast Forms or Reconstruction

After breast surgery, you may have the option to rebuild your breast with breast reconstruction surgery or wear an artificial breast form that looks and feels like a natural breast. Your doctor can review all your options with you before the surgery. Even though having your breast rebuilt or wearing a breast form cannot restore the sensation found in a natural breast, it may help you feel better about yourself. Always know that it is your *choice* and you should do breast reconstruction only if *you* want to, not for others. Take the *time* that you need to make a decision. Delaying the breast reconstruction surgery will not affect your treatment.

Sexuality After Breast Cancer Treatment

After breast cancer treatment, you may not feel like having sex or you may feel discomfort during sex. You may feel unattractive and wonder if your partner still wants to be with you. Although these concerns are very normal, they can affect your relationship with your partner. There are things you can do to improve your sexual desire and comfort with intimacy:

- Have open and honest communication with your partner. Sharing your feelings about the changes you are feeling and experiencing can help strengthen your relationship.
- If you are not ready to show your scars during sex, cover them with lingerie or nightwear.
- Try cuddling, massage, touching, and closeness to improve desire for sex.



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For more information in English, visit Cancer.org, LookGoodFeelBetter.org, CancerCare.org, LivingBeyondBreastCancer.org, or ChemoComfort.org. For information in Chinese, visit the American Cancer Society Web site at <http://www.cancer.org/healthy/informationforhealthcareprofessionals/cancer-information-in-chinese>.



Printing of this educational material was made possible with funding from Susan G. Komen® Greater NYC.