

Surgery for Breast Cancer

Often surgery is the first treatment against breast cancer. Breast cancer surgery is the removal of the tumor and a margin of surrounding healthy tissue.

Decisions about the type of surgery depend on multiple factors.

Larger tumors may benefit from chemotherapy prior to surgery to reduce the size of the tumor.

You and your doctor will determine the kind of surgery that is most appropriate for you based on the stage of the cancer, the type of breast cancer, test results and what is acceptable to you.

The breast cancer care team will specifically tailor the treatment for each patient and the breast cancer, using guidelines.

There are two types of breast cancer surgery:

- **Lumpectomy.** This is the removal of the tumor and a small, cancer-free margin of healthy tissue around the tumor. Most of the breast remains. A lumpectomy may also be called breast-conserving surgery, a wide local excision, or partial mastectomy.
- **Mastectomy.** This is the surgical removal of the entire breast. There are several types of mastectomies. Talk with your doctor about whether the skin can be preserved, called a skin-sparing mastectomy; or whether the nipple can be preserved, called a nipple-sparing mastectomy.

Lymph node removal and analysis. The surgeon may remove several lymph nodes under your arm during your lumpectomy or mastectomy. Examining your lymph nodes helps your doctors figure out the extent of cancer involvement and will be information used in additional treatment decisions.

- **Sentinel lymph node biopsy** is the removal of the closest (the sentinel) node to the cancer and sometimes 2-3 additional nodes.
- **Axillary lymph node dissection** is the removal of a larger number of nodes. This may be done if you have a positive axillary lymph node for metastatic breast cancer, but not always.

Reconstructive (plastic) surgery is the rebuilding of the breast after mastectomy and sometimes lumpectomy. Reconstruction can take place at the same time as cancer-removing surgery, or months to years later. Some women decide not to have reconstruction or opt for a prosthesis instead.

For many patients, surgery is just one aspect of treatment. Patients may have systematic therapy: chemotherapy, targeted therapy and/or hormonal therapy or radiation therapy.

Content adapted from websites below.

Resources for Additional Information:

- Breastcancer.org.Surgery
- NationalBreastCancerFoundation.Inc..Surgery
- Cancer.Net.BreastCancer:TypesofTreatment
- NCCNGuidelinesforPatients.BreastCancer
- LivingBeyondBreastCancer.Surgery
- NCIBreastCancer
- AmericanCancerSociety--BreastCancer.SurgeryforBreastCancer
- AmericanCancerSociety--BreastCancer.BreastReconstructionSurgery

American Cancer Society Phone Number - 800-227-2345

Recursos en Español:

- NIH.Cirugía para tratar el cáncer
- NIH.Opciones de cirugía para mujeres con CDIS o con cáncer de seno