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I CAN DEAL WITH BREAST CANCER BETTER



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I Can Deal With Breast Cancer Better

Introduction

When you are diagnosed with cancer, it is often shocking. You may feel pain, confused and hopeless during this period. Many thoughts come to mind when the treatment journey is about to begin. Would it be a burden to the family physically, emotionally and financially? However, many breast cancer patients have successfully completed treatment and are now living a meaningful life.

This book is a diary to guide and encourage you to record the details of every aspect of your cancer treatment including your feelings and emotions.

This book provides you information on breast cancer and the treatment options that your doctor had planned with you. Testimonies show that patients feel hopeful when they are adequately informed about their disease and have had the opportunity to discuss about their treatment options.

We encourage you to add your own pictures, articles and write down your hopes and dreams that inspired you to live. We hope that you will benefit by keeping this book with you.

“Breast cancer can be cured if detected AND TREATED early.”

The average 5-year survival rate for women in the United States with non-metastatic invasive breast cancer is 90%. The average 10-year survival rate for women with non-metastatic invasive breast cancer is 84%.

To find out the breast cancer patient survival rate in Asia (categorised according to cancer stages), refer to these link:



Cancare Malaysia



Cancare Asia

Source: <https://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/breast-cancer/statistics>



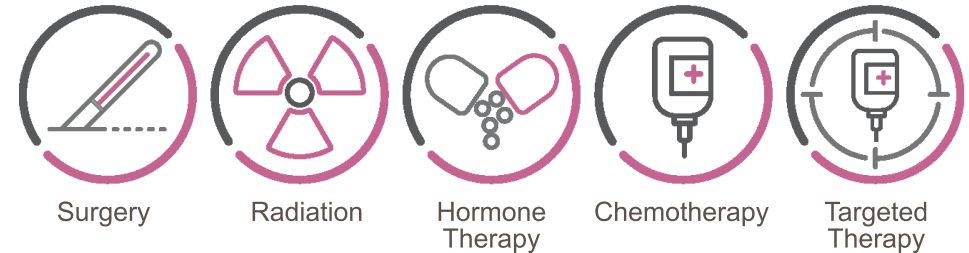
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Chapter 1

Understanding My Treatment Options and Common Side Effects

5 STANDARD Treatment Options



Gentle reminder: please discuss treatment options (as per table below) as planned with your doctor before making any decision

TABLE: Breast Cancer Treatment Options

Treatment	What Is It?	How Is It Given?	What Makes It Unique?	Common Side Effects
Surgery	Operative procedure to remove the cancerous tumor from the breast	n/a	It can be performed as the only treatment, or prior to or after chemotherapy	Seroma, hematoma, lymphoedema, pain, infection, cosmetic issues
Chemotherapy	Drugs that kill cancer cells directly	Oral or intravenously	The drugs can stop or slow cancer growth and harm healthy cells	Fatigue, hair loss, bruising or bleeding, infection, anemia, nausea, vomiting, appetite changes, constipation

TABLE: Breast Cancer Treatment Options (continued)

Treatment	What Is It?	How Is It Given?	What Makes It Unique?	Common Side Effects
Hormone Therapy	Medication that is specific to types of breast cancer that are promoted by hormones (eg, estrogen and progesterone)	By mouth or injection in the skin	These drugs work by stopping hormones from fueling breast cancer growth	Hot flashes, Vaginal dryness, night sweats, bone pain
Biologic Targeted Therapy	A drug that alters the behavior of a cancer cell	Intravenously or oral	It interferes with specific molecules involved in tumour growth and progression	Heart impairment, diarrhoea, shortness of breath
Immunotherapy	Drugs that help the immune system to improve its action against cancer	Intravenously	It takes advantage of a person's own immune system to help kill cancer cells	Flu-like symptoms, rash, fatigue
Radiation	Special high-energy beams to damage cancer cells	By a machine called a linear accelerator	Targeted way to destroy cancer cells in the breast that may remain after surgery	Area of skin treated can turn pinkish or red, feel itchy or sore and become dry and peel off

Chapter 2

Your Concerns Are Ours To Help With

Wound management

After surgery there will be an incisional wound. The original dressing can be left in place for up to two days (or as advised by the nurse/doctor), as long as it is not oozing. If the dressing becomes wet from blood or any other liquid, it must be changed.

Your doctor or nurse will usually instruct you to observe the incisional wound for some red flags or concerns of signs and symptoms of wound infection, such as:

1. Sudden onset of pain which cannot be relieved with the use of painkillers
2. Increased swelling or redness at the operated site
3. Excessive bleeding or discharge from the surgical site
4. Fever of more than 38 degrees Celsius

Should you experience any of these signs or symptoms please contact your doctor or nurse the earliest possible.

Be aware of the following precautions:

1. If there is a dressing covering the wound, try to keep it dry. No showering unless the dressing is water-resistant.
 - a. Be gentle. Do not let water seep through when showering even with the water-resistant dressing intact in place.
2. If the wound is exposed with no dressing, a shiny layer over the scar may be noticed. This is a layer of skin glue meant to protect the wound and promote healing.
 - a. Do not rub or peel off the glue. In about three to four weeks, it will gradually flake off.
 - b. Do check with your doctor or nurse if it's alright to shower after three to five days post-surgery with an exposed wound.
 - c. After shower, air-dry the area or lightly pat dry it with a clean soft towel.
3. Put on a set of loose-fitting clothes to avoid rubbing on the incisional wound.

How do I care for my incisions after surgery?

If there is a need to change the dressing especially when it is wet either after a shower or if there is discharge or bleeding, these are the steps to follow:

1. Wash your hands and dry them before starting any preparation.
2. Collect all the required supplies and start preparing them by opening the bottle of normal saline solution (for wound cleansing), the dressing pack and gauze packages. Cut ready new tape strips. Prepare a bag to place all the used consumables during dressing.
3. Wash your hands again before touching the dressing/wound. Put on a pair of medical gloves.
4. Loosen the tape around the old dressing then remove it with a pair of forceps (do not reuse the pair of forceps).
5. Inspect the incisional wound for signs of infection. Record the information for reporting later.
6. Perform the change of dressing first by cleansing the wound gently with the normal saline solution as taught by the nurse.
7. After the wound is cleansed, dab it dry with a piece of clean gauze.
8. Cover the wound with a new piece of gauze or dressing and secure it with tape.
9. Ensure all the used consumables are thrown into the bag. Remove your gloves.
10. Seal the plastic bag and throw it away.
11. Wash your hands and dry them.
12. Report any issue of concern to the doctor/nurse after the wound dressing has been completed if necessary. Standby for any instructions.



When do I need to start arm exercises?

We recommend you to start arm exercises as early as the 1st to 3rd day after surgery (please check with your doctor on exactly when to start). Increase the intensity of the exercise movements gradually according to your comfort level.

First week after surgery

Do the warm-ups, basic exercises then cool down.

Second week and beyond

Do the warm-ups, basic and advanced exercises, then cool down.

These timings are meant as a guide — you should complete the exercises at your own pace.

- Begin the exercises the day after your surgery
- Do each exercise 5 times before you move on to the next one
- Do the exercises 3 times a day — in the morning, around midday and in the evening

If you underwent breast reconstruction, talk to your surgeon or physiotherapist before you start or continue any exercises and follow their advice.

You should not feel pain when doing these exercises. However, a stretching or pulling sensation is normal. If you have any concerns about your range of movement or level of discomfort while doing these exercises, speak to your surgeon, breast care nurse or physiotherapist.

Get started with the following motions to warm up. Perform them again at the end of your exercise session to cool down. These can be done standing up or sitting down.



1. Shoulder shrugs

- Relax your arms by your sides
- Shrug your shoulders up and lower gently back down



2. Shoulder circles

- Relax your arms by your sides
- Shrug your shoulders up and circle them back and down

Basic exercises

You can do these exercises in the first week after surgery. These can be done sitting down or standing up. Do not forget to warm up first!

Note that for these exercises, do not raise your arms above shoulder level (90 degrees).



1. Arm bends

- Lift both arms 90 degrees forward
- Bend your elbows and lightly rest your hands on your shoulders
- Slowly lower your elbows, then raise them again



Alternative

- Rest your hands on your shoulders but move your elbows out to the sides
- Slowly lower your elbows, then raise them again
-

2. Back-arm lifts

- Lift your elbows out to the sides
- Using your hands, reach up behind your back slowly and try to touch just underneath your shoulder blades



3. Elbow touches

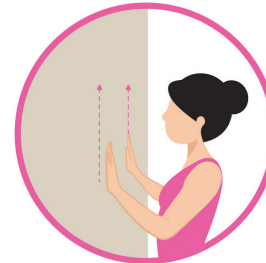
- Place your hands behind your head with your elbows pointing to the sides
- Bring your elbows in front of you so that they touch, then return to the starting position



Advanced exercises

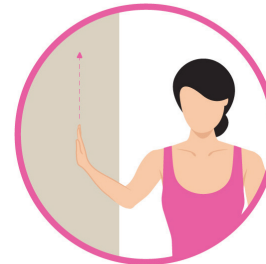
You can perform advanced exercises in the second week after surgery (Note that if you have removable stitches or a drain, wait until these have been removed). For these exercises, the arms should be raised above shoulder level.

Remember to do the warm-ups and basic exercises first each time. If you face issues with a buildup of fluid at your operation site, wound infection, ongoing or worsening pain, stop exercising and speak to your surgeon or breast care nurse.



4. Wall climbing

- As you face a wall, stand close to it with your feet apart
- Place both hands against the wall at shoulder level
- Slowly move your hands up the wall, sliding them or using your fingers to climb as far as you can, feeling a stretch but not pain
- Hold and count to 10
- Slide your hands back to shoulder level before repeating the exercise
- Try to get higher each time
- Then, stand sideways with your affected side closer to the wall
- Place your hand on the wall while keeping your elbow bent and your shoulders relaxed
- Slowly creep your hand up the wall as far as you can as your elbow straightens
- Hold and count to 10, then lower your hand back down



5. Arm Lifts

- Lie on the bed or floor with a cushion or pillow underneath your head
- Take three or four really deep breaths while relaxing your shoulders. Ensure that they are not hunched
- Clasp your hands together or hold onto a stick or broom handle. Keeping your elbows straight, lift your arms up and over your head as far as you feel comfortable
- Hold and count to 10, then lower your arms gradually. You may find it useful to have a pillow behind you to support your arms until you can get them further back



Alternative

If you have difficulty lying down (for example, due to breathlessness) you can do this exercise in a sitting position, leaning back in your chair



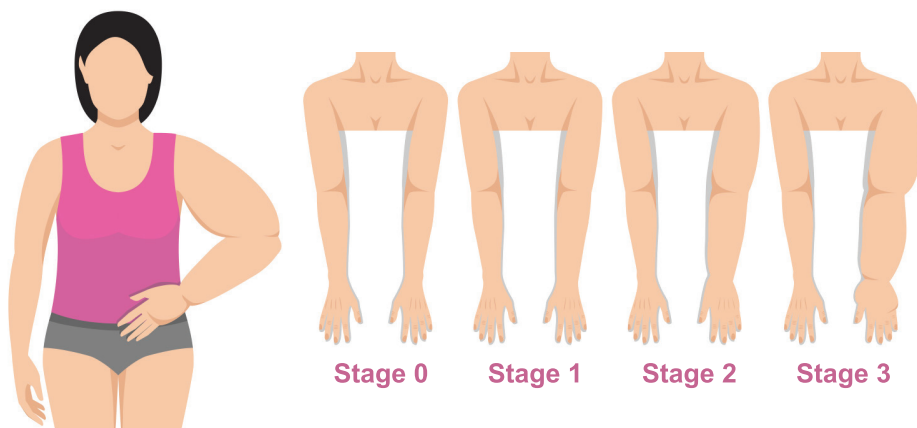
1. Elbow Push

- Lie on your back with your hands behind your head and your elbows out to the sides
- Gently push your elbows downwards into the bed or floor as far as what is comfortable
- Hold and count to 10, then relax

This exercise is particularly helpful if you go on to have radiotherapy as the treatment will often require you to be in a similar position.

What can I do when I experience lymphoedema (swelling)?

Patients who experience repeated edema after an arm exercise are advised to seek professional assistance from a Physiotherapist who is trained in lymphoedema care.



Here are some suggestions to minimise the risk of lymphoedema:

- Maintain good nutrition (Protein-rich, low-salt diet)
- Maintain your body weight
- Exercise regularly
- Watch for signs of swelling or infection (redness, pain, warm to touch fever)
- Avoid cuts, insect bites and sun exposure on the affected limb, including injections and blood draws
- Avoid tight-fitting clothes, shoes or jewellery
- Avoid use of affected limb for heavy lifting or for repetitive movement
- Use compression garments (when necessary)

Chapter 3

Chemotherapy Side Effect Diary

Date: _____

Please circle ONE per each type of side effect you currently experiencing. Cycle No: _____

Type	None	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Fatigue	None	Experiencing symptoms but maintaining normal activity	Rest for less than half of each day	Rest for more than half of each day
Hair	No change	Minimal loss	Patchy loss	Complete loss
Mouth	Normal	Sore	Ulcer, but eating	Taking liquid only
Nausea	None	Eating almost as normal	Can eat but much less than normal	Not really able to eat
Vomiting	None	1 episode in 24 hours	2-5 episodes in 24 hours	6-10 episodes in 24 hours
Diarrhoea	None	Less than 2 days No. of times a day: _____	More than 2 days No. of times a day: _____	Intolerable No. of times a day: _____
Constipation	None	Bowels opened almost as normal	Bowels opening but much less than normal	Bowels not opened for more than 2 days; feeling bloated
Nerve and weakness	Normal	Slight or mild tingling sensation; numbness	Difficulty in touching, holding or grabbing objects	Unable to touch, hold or grab objects; marked weakness
Pain	<p>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>			

Note: you may make extra copies of this page to record based when your treatment cycle beyond 6.

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Chapter 4

Nutrition Intake During My Treatment Journey

What to do if you lose your appetite?

1. Break your meals into small portions but increase the frequency with an interval of two to three hours or five to six times a day. But increase the frequency of the meal with intervals of 2 to 3 hours or 5 to 6 times a day.
2. **Snacking** is important when you are unable to eat well. Keep snacks available at all times. Include 1 to 2 snacks a day in between meals to boost your calorie and protein intake.

Snacks in between meals	
Bread with butter and kaya / jam	Plain cakes
Sandwiches	Pudding and custards
Soft bread with cheese	Yogurt
Bun and roll	Milk or cocoa drink
Biscuits with cream	Ice cream / milkshake
Nuts and seeds	Cream soup
Hard boiled / scrambled eggs / omelette	Steamed kuih / bun / pau

3. When preparing food, try to add **high-calorie food** into your meals such as cheese, margarine, or add whipped cream, milk powder, etc. into your beverage.

Adding calories into foods	
Soft margarine	Healthy cooking oils
Salad dressings and Mayonnaise	Peanut butter paste
Honey	Banana / mango
Cheese	Whipped cream
Milk powder	Ice cream
Jam or marmalade	

- Protein** is important for wound healing and rebuilding muscles. Food sources which are high in protein are listed as below:

Food item	Suggestion
Cheese	Melt on sandwiches, bread, omelette, muffins, hamburgers, eggs. Grate and add to soup, sauce, casserole, vegetable.
Milk or powdered milk	Add to beverages / milkshake. Add during the preparation of hot cereal, pudding, gravy or soups
Commercial nutritional supplements	Drink on its own, preferably 1 to 3 times a day depending on your appetite. Eg. Ensure Gold / Nutren Fiber / Supportan / Prosure
Fish, poultry and meat	Steamed fish / chicken, minced meat. Add chopped, cooked meat or fish to soup, porridge or noodles.
Eggs	Add chopped, hard boiled eggs to soups, dishes and sandwiches (avoid raw eggs, it may contain harmful bacteria and your treatment may cause you to be susceptible to infection).
Beans and Legumes	Cook and use dried peas, beans and bean curd (tofu) in soups, porridge and noodles.

- Add spices or herbs for flavour, thus boosting your appetite.
- If loss of appetite persists for over two (2) consecutive days, consult your doctor or Dietitian.

Offer Variety

Offer variety with small portions of nutrients food. Eat more often throughout the day.



Refreshing Treats

Small portions of these desserts will soothe your mouth throughout the day.



Nutritional Supplements

If you have poor oral intake, consider adding these options to your diet.



Protein jelly : 5 g of protein per serving



Commercial nutritional supplement milkshake

Texture Modified Meals

You can start with pureed food to soft diet when you are recovering and eventually to a normal diet.



Blended/Puree diet

Soft diet

Normal diet

For further consultation in nutrition, please consult your dietitian.

Mindful Eating



Don't hurry



Feel the taste of food



Play soft, relaxing music



Eat your favorite food last



Respect your body and health



Drink more water

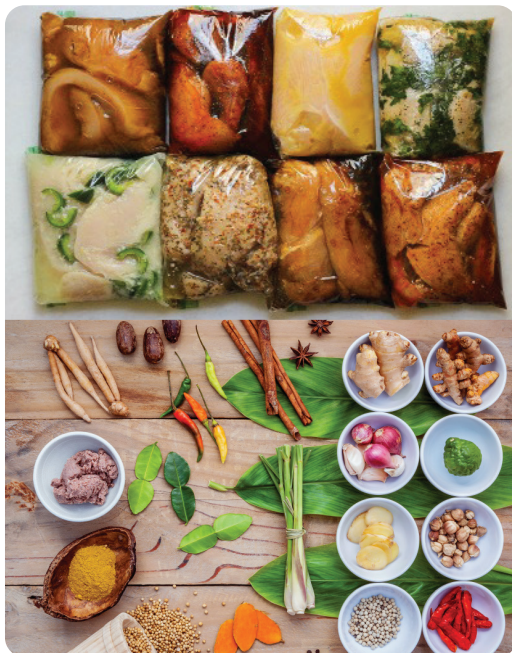


Sit at a proper table



No multitasking

Marinate with Natural Seasoning



Marinate food with natural seasoning to maximise the flavor of the food.

Chapter 5

Frequently Asked Questions



I've heard that soy is good for us, but I've also heard that it contains estrogen. Is it safe to eat soy foods or use supplements?

Yes, but a typical serving of soy to be adhered to is:

- 250 ml (1 cup) soy beverage
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) tofu
- 60 ml (1/4 cup) roasted soy nuts
- 175 ml (3/4 cup) edamame

Someone suggested that I should add flaxseeds to my diet. Can I?

Flaxseeds are a good source of fiber and a type of fat called omega 3 fatty acids. When grounded, they are a source of phytoestrogens (weak plant estrogen). 1-2 tablespoons of grounded flaxseeds is good.

I've heard that women who have had breast cancer should avoid milk products because they contain estrogen. Is this true?

The hormone estrogen may stimulate certain forms of breast cancer. To date, large cohort studies have found no link between consuming dairy products during adolescence/early adulthood and the risk of breast cancer (before or after menopause). More studies are still underway.

I'm concerned about pesticides in the food supply. Is buying organically grown food the answer?

Pesticides used in farming have the potential to build up in the body, which has caused concern for the risk of developing cancer. Current evidence suggests there may be a possible association between pesticides and some cancers.

How to minimise pesticide residues

- Wash all produce thoroughly with running water
- Use a small scrub brush to clean the outer skin of vegetables and fruit
- Peel vegetables and fruit and trim the outer leaves of leafy vegetables

What if I am taking other medications?

You should inform the Oncologist in charge or nurse if you are taking other prescribed or over-the-counter medications and supplements. The Oncologist in charge will review all the medications taken and may prescribe other alternatives to supplement the current ones being taken.

If you still have more questions, be sure to consult your doctor.

Chapter 6

Look Good Feel Better

Self-care is important when undergoing cancer treatment.

- Continue to get enough rest
- Maintain a well-balanced diet
- Return to your usual social activities according to your own interest/condition
- Return to work whenever you are able to
- Do not miss your appointment

Look Good Feel Better is dedicated to improving the self-esteem, confidence and well-being of patients undergoing treatment. It is our aim to improve their self-image and appearance through free support groups, and self-help skincare and makeup workshops that create a sense of support, confidence, and well-being. Learn how to manage appearance-related side effects which occur as a result of treatment. Please ask our patient navigator for more information.

**Check with your doctor regarding your skin care requirements (may differ for chemo and radiotherapy)

Scalp Care

Scalp cooling helps patients recover quickly from hair loss, leading to improvement in quality of life.



Source: Ms Yamamoto's poster presented at Annual Breast Cancer Society Meeting, Tokyo, July 2019

Special Bra vs Prosthesis

“After mastectomy, the provision of an appropriate breast prosthesis can help to improve body image and quality of life and reduce associated emotional distress.”¹

Breast Prosthesis is essential, be it for lumpectomy or mastectomy. It alters the appearance of the breast. As every woman's body is different, breast prostheses are available in different shapes, styles and sizes.

A well-fitted breast prosthesis can benefit you :



1. Achieve Balanced Posture: Symmetrical Shoulder & Backbone



2. Protect the Wound

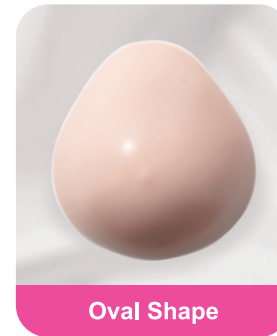


3. Help Relieve Shoulder & Back Pain

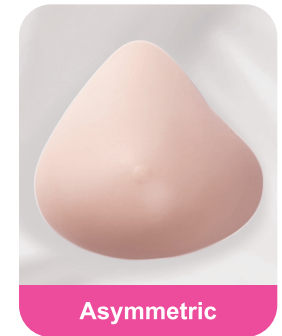
Different styles of breast prosthesis



Triangle Shape



Oval Shape



Asymmetric

More info at www.cancare.my and www.cancare.asia

¹ Roberts S, Livingston P, White V, Gibbs A. External breast prosthesis use: experiences and views of women with breast cancer, breast care nurses, and prosthesis fitters. *Cancer Nurs.* 2003 Jun;26(3):179-86. doi: 10.1097/00002820-200306000-00002. PMID: 12832950

Chapter 7

Life After Cancer



A new normal

Adapting to life after being cured of cancer is a challenge. Manage your daily life by breaking down changes into smaller steps.

In lieu of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is vital that you observe the necessary measures to protect yourself as you are more vulnerable during this period. Observe the following:

- Wear a face mask
- Wash hands frequently
- Minimise public contact, if possible (within the first 3 – 6 months of your post recovery stage, as this is when you are most vulnerable)



Follow up care

When the course of treatment is completed, your Oncologist will schedule a post-treatment review (follow up) for the patient to monitor the response of the tumour, side effects, and the health of the patient. It is important to attend these follow-ups to detect changes to your health resulting from cancer treatment or for early breast cancer recurrence.



Managing physical changes

Apart from your emotions, the body undergoes various changes too. Depending on your condition and the treatment received, you may experience some chronic aches, fatigue, memory and concentration problems, numbness in the hands or feet, and changes to the skin and nails. These physical symptoms may take weeks or months to resolve. The following are some tips to manage them:

- Take the prescribed painkillers (if necessary), use hot or cold packs, and have a soothing massage.
- Plan and prioritise your activities, have sufficient rest periods and establish a regular sleep pattern.
- Keep a notebook of daily reminders and avoid distractions when performing a task.
- Be aware of the areas experiencing numbness and protect them from injuries.
- Protect your skin and nails from further damage — apply moisturisers and sunblock regularly.



Knowing more about the changes above may help to allay some of your fears about cancer recurrence. Contact your doctor or nurse if you persistently feel a lack of interest in leisure or participating in activities, frequently feel down and not eating or sleeping well.

The following signs and symptoms may or may not indicate cancer recurrence (which is not common). Nevertheless, do be alert if they are not improving as consulting a doctor is important to detect early incidence of recurrence:

- A new lump at the breast or armpit area, and changes such as dimpling of the skin, presence of rash, nipple retraction or discharge.
- Persistent headache, blurring of vision, nausea or vomiting.
- A prickling pain in the operated breast which may be persistent.
- Persistent bone pain, sudden weakness or changes in your gait.
- Persistent cough or difficulty in breathing.

Chapter 9

How to Determine the Size and Cup of your Mastectomy Brassiere

STEP 1 – GETTING THE BRA SIZE (PREFERABLY STANDING WITH BRA ON)

Measure your body circumference directly underneath the breast snugly.

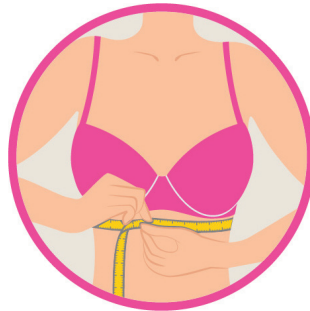
If the measurement obtained is an even number, add 4 inches.

e.g. 28" + 4" = 32" => Your Bra Size will be 32.

If the measurement obtained is an odd number, add 5 inches.

e.g. 29" + 5" = 34" => Your bra size will be 34.

If your body's circumference measures 40 inches or more, add just 1 - 2 inches to get an even number. If measurement is taken while seated, no need to add.



STEP 2 - DETERMINE THE CUP SIZE

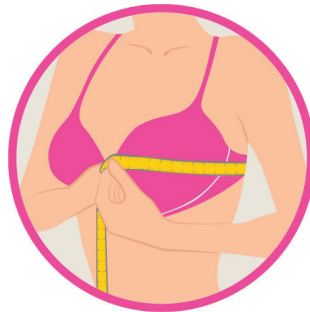
Measure your natural breast from the center of your sternum (chest bone), directly across the nipple area and under the axilla (armpit) to the centre of your back (spine).

Multiply this measurement by 2. E.g. 18" X 2 = 36"

The difference between the 1st measurement (step 1) and the 2nd measurement (step 2) will help determine the cup of your bra.

E.g. Bra Size = 34" (step 1) and difference = 2" (step 2)

=> You are a 34B!



Difference between the 2 Measurements	Cup Size
0"	AA
1"	A
2"	B
3"	C
4"	D
5"	DD

Breast Prosthesis Sizing Guide

Size Guide - Breast Forms, Shapes and Post-op Forms

How to use this chart:

1. Find your customer's cup size on the left side of the chart.
2. Scroll your finger to the right to the customer's band size.
3. Scroll your finger down the chart to the breast form you choose to fit.

Example: or a customer with a 36B bra size, start with a size 5.

CUP SIZES	BAND SIZES															
	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58	60
AA																
A																
B																
C																
D																
DD/E																
DDD/F																
DDDD/G																
STYLES	PROFILES															
Sponge	average															
930	average-full															
931	average-full															
11212	local coverage															
11242	full coverage															
11672	adjustable full coverage															
1004	full															
1031	full															
1032	full															
1041	average															
1042	average															
1044	average															
1072	shallow															
10250	average															
10270	shallow															
10275	average															
10280	average															
10295	shallow															
10475	average															
10585	shallow-average															
10672	adjustable															

Legend: ■ Post-Surgical/Leisure Forms ■ Shapers ■ Breast Forms

QUICK CHECK FOR A GOOD FIT

1. Does the bra ride up?

The bra should be worn snug (not loose) so that the bandeau can work/support.

2. Does the breast form feel heavy?

Adjust the bra straps so that the breast form is close to the body and/or try on a different bra style with wider shoulder straps.

3. Does the breast form projection match the natural side?

Try a bigger/smaller breast form, or a different shape.

4. Is there a depressed area above the breast form?

Try using a bust cup to fill in the 'cavity'.

5. Measurement

Measure from the center of the chest across the nipple to the center of the back on both sides. The measurement should be about the same on both sides.



MY BODY MEASUREMENT RECORD:

Breast prosthesis model & size: _____

Mastectomy bra model & size: _____

Refer to the guideline and measure your body when there is weight or size changes.

Date	Under bust circumference (inch)	Bra Size	Chest circumference (inch)	Cup Size	Body Weight

