

I-MAY-NOT-HAVE-
ALL-THE-ANSWERS-
BUT-AT-LEAST-I-HAVE-
THE-QUESTIONS-
TO-GET-THE-PROPER

care guidelines



Hi

[REDACTED]

,

Being diagnosed with breast cancer is tough at any age, but being diagnosed when you're young makes it even more complicated. We won't tell you we know how you feel. But we will say you're allowed to be sad, scared or even angry.

As a young woman with breast cancer, you may be facing challenges such as a diagnosis during pregnancy, the effects of treatment on fertility, risk of menopausal symptoms or osteoporosis, or feelings of isolation. Or you may have questions about sexuality, childcare, relationships, dating, employment or finances. Your healthcare team should address all of these topics with you, but we know sometimes your needs can get missed. That's why we've created these *Care Guidelines* and are working to ensure they are implemented in every cancer treatment centre in Canada.

Use this book to help you and your loved ones navigate your diagnosis and treatment,

and ensure that your unique needs are addressed in a timely manner. Write down any questions that you have, keep notes and important contact information, and share this information with your friends and family so they can help you get access to the resources you need.

We know that treatment is no easy feat, and it's not one-size-fits-all. But we believe that knowledge is power, and the only way you can properly advocate for yourself is to be informed. And just remember: you are not alone. There are a lot of people who really Give-A-Care about you, including us. So we're here to help you get the care you really need.

SINCERELY,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MJ Decoteau". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "MJ" and "Decoteau" being capitalized and prominent.

MJ DECOTEAU
FOUNDER + EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF RETHINK BREAST CANCER

**If you are a
young woman
with breast cancer
and are looking
for support,
resources
or community,
please get in touch
with us at**

SUPPORT@RETHINKBREASTCANCER.COM

or visit us at

RETHINKBREASTCANCER.COM

**As a Young
Woman
with Breast
Cancer,
You Should...**



1

RECEIVE TREATMENT AND CARE TAILORED TO YOU

You should receive treatment and care from healthcare professionals who are sensitive to the unique needs and concerns that you may face as a young woman with breast cancer.

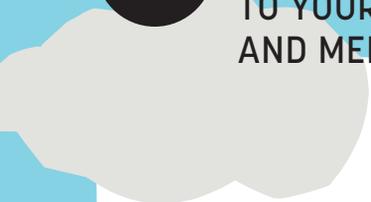
- Ask your doctors and nurses if they've ever treated a young woman with breast cancer before—just to get a handle on the situation.
- If you're one of the first young patients they've seen, you can share a copy of these *Care Guidelines* if they are not already aware of them.
- Oncology nurses can be very helpful to connect you with resources and help to manage side effects. Some hospitals even have nurse navigators who can help you navigate the system by making sure you know what's happening next, telling you when and where you need to be, and connecting you with other professional and community resources.



2

**BE ASKED
ABOUT BREAST
CANCER
IN YOUR FAMILY**

You should have a full family history taken as soon as possible as it relates to inherited cancer risk. If appropriate, you should be offered a referral to a genetic specialist for testing and counselling.



3

**BE INFORMED ABOUT
POTENTIAL CHANGES
TO YOUR SEXUAL
AND MENTAL HEALTH**

**You should be told about
the risk of menstrual
irregularity or early
menopause as a result
of some treatments.**

**You should also be given
advice on how to cope
physically and emotionally
with these and other
possible effects of
treatment, which can
impact body image and
sexual health, or result
in brain fog.**



4

**BE INFORMED ABOUT
THE POTENTIAL
EFFECTS ON
YOUR FERTILITY**

You should be given a full explanation during initial treatment planning about the possible impact on fertility.

If appropriate, you should be referred promptly to a fertility specialist to discuss options for preserving fertility before starting chemotherapy or hormone therapy. You should also be given information on contraception and pregnancy after treatment.



5

**RECEIVE SPECIAL
CARE IF YOU
ARE PREGNANT
OR A NEW MOM**

You should be offered counselling if you are diagnosed with breast cancer during pregnancy or within a year of giving birth to help you cope with the impact on you and your family.

- Parenting a newborn is tricky at the best of times, so it's normal to feel overwhelmed—especially with the added burden of treatment. Therapeutic and social support is helpful to get through this difficult time.
- If you have to be treated with chemotherapy during pregnancy, speak to your healthcare team about your options.
- A mastectomy and/or surgical treatments will have an impact on breastfeeding. If this is important to you, contact a lactation consultant to explore your options.



7

BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO SOMEONE

You should have the opportunity to discuss some of the complex life decisions you may be facing in a supportive environment with a skilled counsellor, especially if you are having difficulty coping with making major life decisions sooner than you expected.

- It's important to have support to help you cope with your diagnosis and maintain the best quality of life.
- Professional support comes in many different forms. Most hospitals have counsellors who specialize in helping people with cancer on-site, and there are programs available to accommodate different needs and personalities.
- If you're feeling overwhelmed, tell your oncology nurse or nurse navigator that you would like to speak to one of the staff psychologists.

9

BE OFFERED RESOURCES TO HELP MANAGE FINANCES

You should be given, if needed, the opportunity to be put in touch with community agencies to discuss the financial implications associated with breast cancer, including employment rights, benefit plans, coping with a loss of income, and the effects on mortgage and insurance.

- Young women, in particular, may find a cancer diagnosis to be a very difficult disruption in their careers. Speak to a counsellor and/or your company's HR department about all of your options for cutting back or pausing work.
- Consult a financial planner to create a strategy for the costs associated with cancer care.
- There are programs and services available to you if you are in need of financial assistance. For more information, check out [RETHINKBREASTCANCER.COM/
FINANCIAL-RESOURCES](https://www.rethinkbreastcancer.com/financial-resources)



10

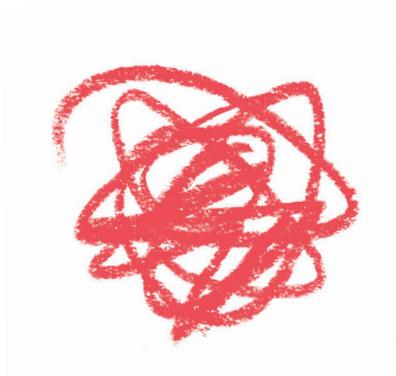
**KNOW
THAT
YOU'RE
NOT ALONE**



You should have the opportunity to be connected with other young women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer.

You should also be told about long-term sources of post-treatment peer support.

**Life
After
Treatment:
Your
New
Normal**



AFTER YOU'VE COMPLETED YOUR BREAST CANCER TREATMENT, YOU MAY FIND THAT IT'S A STRUGGLE TO ADJUST TO YOUR "NEW NORMAL." YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY MIGHT EXPECT YOU TO BOUNCE BACK AND NOT REALIZE THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL TOLL THAT GOING THROUGH CANCER CONTINUES TO HAVE ON YOU, LONG AFTER YOU'VE HAD THAT LAST TREATMENT OR SURGERY. IN FACT, MANY PEOPLE FIND THE END OF TREATMENT THE MOST DIFFICULT STAGE OF CANCER TO NAVIGATE. IF YOU'RE HAVING TROUBLE COPING WITH MOVING FORWARD, THESE TIPS CAN HELP YOU GET THROUGH IT.

FOR MORE ON THESE GUIDELINES,
FURTHER EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES, AND TO
LEARN ABOUT OUR SUPPORT GROUPS, VISIT
[RETHINKBREASTCANCER.COM](https://www.rethinkbreastcancer.com)

#GIVEACARE

REXNIHL
breast cancer

