



## FAQ

In order to make informed decisions about your health after receiving your breast cancer diagnosis, it is important to make a list of important questions to ask to your doctor through the different stages of your treatment.

### Questions to ask after getting your diagnosis:

Do we have enough information to recommend a treatment plan for me? If not, which tests or procedures will be needed? Will I need to see other doctors?

What are my treatment options?

What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?

When do I need to make a treatment decision?

What is the goal of each treatment? Is it to eliminate the cancer, help me feel better, or both?

What can I do to get ready for treatment?

If I am worried about managing the costs of cancer care, who can help me? Who can help me understand what aspects of my care are covered by my insurance?

If I have questions or problems, who should I call?

Do you communicate with your patients by email or with an electronic health record system?

If I have a strong family history of cancer, what is my chance of getting another cancer?

How does that change my treatment options? Should I see a genetic counselor?

What should I tell my employer, if anything, and what laws protect my rights as an employee?

### Questions to ask your breast surgeon before your first surgery

Do you specialize in this type of surgery?

How many operations like the one I am considering have you performed?

Do I need any other tests before this surgery?

Am I a candidate for a lumpectomy?

Do I need a mastectomy? Is reconstruction (plastic surgery) an option for me? What are the advantages and disadvantages? Is it possible to avoid removing my nipple and areola?

Should I consider chemotherapy before surgery?

Will I need radiation therapy after surgery? Does this affect my reconstruction options?

When do I need to make a decision about surgery?

What should I do to get ready for the operation? Do you have recommendations on how to help me relax before surgery?

What medications and supplements should I stop taking? Should I stop taking hormone replacement therapy? What about birth control pills?

Will you describe exactly what you will do during this operation, and why?

What are the potential risks and side effects of this operation? What can be done to ease side effects following surgery?

What can I expect regarding the operation?

How long will my surgery take?

What type of anesthesia will I need for this operation?

How long do I have to wait for my preoperative test results? Do I call you, or does your office call me?

What are the possible complications for this type of surgery? How would I know if there is a problem?

How long will it take me to recover after the surgery?

When can I return to work and other daily activities?

Will I have stitches, staples, and/or bandages?

Will there be permanent effects from the surgery?

Where will the scar be, and what will it look like?

What type of clothes should I bring to go home in? Will I need a special type of bra?

When will I need to return for a follow-up appointment?

Will I need help at home after the surgery?

What kind of pain will I be in afterwards? Can you help me manage my pain?

When should I call your office if I experience any side effects?

### Questions to ask your breast surgeon after your first surgery

What type of breast cancer do I have?

What is the size of the tumor?

What is the grade and stage of this disease? What are my biomarkers? What do these mean?

What are the chances that the breast cancer will return?

Can you explain my laboratory test results to me?

Was all of the cancer removed during the surgery?

Will I need to take further medication after surgery even if all of the cancer was removed? If so, why?

Has the cancer spread to any of the lymph nodes? If so, how many? Has the cancer spread to anywhere else in my body?

Do I need additional surgery?

If I have a mastectomy without reconstruction, where can I get a prosthesis? Is this covered by my insurance?

Will my arm be affected by surgery? For how long? Will I need physical therapy for my arm?

When will I be able to work and/or return to my normal routine? Are there any activities I should avoid?

### Questions to ask your plastic surgeon

Are you board-certified? Is breast reconstruction your specialty?

How many breast reconstruction surgeries do you perform in a year?

What should I consider before deciding to have breast reconstruction?

What types of breast reconstruction options are available to me?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each type?

When can I have my reconstruction?

Will I need surgery to the non-reconstructed breast to make the breasts match?

Will I need to coordinate this with my breast surgeon?

If I have radiation therapy, does that change my options for reconstruction?

What are tissue expanders, and will I need them?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each reconstruction option? Does it matter if I sleep on my stomach? Will it be uncomfortable?

Which type of implants do you recommend (saline or silicone), and why? What size?

If you use tissue from another part of my body to rebuild my breast(s), where do you recommend it be taken from, and why?

If I have a mastectomy with implant reconstruction, can I also have a nipple reconstruction? If so, when?

What are the costs involved with breast reconstruction? What is covered by my insurance? Is surgery on the non-reconstructed breast covered by insurance?

How long will the surgery take?

What do I need to do to prepare for the surgery?

What type of anesthesia will I need for this operation?

What can I expect after the operation?

How long will I stay in the hospital?

What are the possible complications for this type of surgery?

How long will it take me to recover?

When can I resume my normal activities, including exercise?

Will I need to have surgical drains? What does this mean?

Will I have stitches, staples, and/or bandages?

Will there be a scar or other permanent effects from the surgery?

Are there instructions or post-operative care pamphlets I can take home with me?

When will I need to return for a follow-up appointment?

What type of results can I expect?

Are there photographs of reconstructed breasts that I can view?

How will the reconstructed breast feel to the touch?

What type of sensation (feeling) will the reconstructed breast have?

What changes to the reconstructed breast can I expect over time?

Will I need to have surgery again in the future (for example, to replace implants over time)?

Do I need mammograms or MRI tests after a breast reconstruction?

What can I expect if my weight changes?

What if I become pregnant in the future?

Source: <https://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/breast-cancer/questions-ask-health-care-team>



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